“KOREA GONE GLOBAL: K-POP AND TECHNOLOGIES OF SOFT POWER”
DR. DAFNA ZUR

Organizing Questions

• What can we learn by studying popular culture?
• How can popular culture increase a country’s global influence?
• How did K-Pop (and Korean popular culture more generally) become so popular around the globe?

Summary

On 29 July 2022 Stanford professor Dr. Dafna Zur gave a 46-minute video lecture titled “Korea Gone Global: K-Pop and Technologies of Soft Power.” Dr. Zur’s remarks covered the origins, features, consequences, and future of Korean popular culture. This discussion guide complements and expands upon the video lecture. Students start by learning about the topics in the video before watching it as homework. They then work in groups on an activity that requires them to synthesize and apply lessons from the video as they contemplate the direction and staying power of K-Pop. This discussion guide is appropriate for advanced secondary students and university students.

Objectives

Through the course of this discussion guide, students will
• recognize the importance of studying popular culture;
• explore the relationship among popular culture, soft power, and international influence;
• critique theories on how Korean popular culture achieved such global popularity; and
• assess the likelihood of other countries replicating the influence of Korean popular culture.
1. Make the appropriate number of copies of handouts.
2. Set up and test computer and projector before starting the lesson.
3. Become familiar with the content of handouts and answer keys.
4. Preview Video, “Korea Gone Global: K-Pop and Technologies of Soft Power” (running time 46 minutes)

Teacher Preparation

1. Explain to students that they will learn about the rise of South Korean popular culture over the next few class periods. They will watch a video lecture by Stanford professor and Korean expert Dr. Dafna Zur that dives deep into the origins, features, consequences, and future of Korean popular culture. This class period will focus on giving students background and context for the video, which they will watch as homework.

2. Inform students that the word “Korean” will be used as shorthand for “South Korean” during this lesson.

3. Distribute one copy of Handout 1, Pre-Video Quiz, to each student. Allow students 10 minutes to complete the quiz.

4. After 10 minutes, review the answers to the questions with students. Use Answer Key 1, Pre-Video Quiz, to direct students to the correct answers. If desired, you can project the Answer Key.
5. Next, write or display the following questions to the class:
   - What does the term “soft power” mean?
   - What are some potential types of evidence that a country has soft power?

6. Ask several students to share their responses. Use Answer Key 2, Defining Soft Power, to lead a short discussion on soft power.

7. Next, show each chart in Display, Influence of Korean Popular Culture in Charts, to the class. Pause on each chart to lead a short class discussion, using Answer Key 3, Influence of Korean Popular Culture in Charts.

8. End the class period by distributing one copy of Handout 2, Video Notes, to each student. Instruct students to complete this handout before the next class period.

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**Before Day Two**

Students watch Video, “Korea Gone Global: K-Pop and Technologies of Soft Power,” and complete Handout 2, Video Notes. Remind students to reserve three hours to watch the video and complete the handout.

**Day Two**

1. Collect Handout 2, Video Notes, from each student. Use Answer Key 4, Video Notes, to assess student responses.

2. Organize the class into groups of five students each. Distribute one copy of Handout 3, Applying Lessons from the Spread of Korean Pop Culture, to each student. Inform students that they have the rest of the class period to work on this assignment in their groups.

3. Check in on groups for the remainder of the class period. Refer to Answer Key 5, Applying Lessons from the Spread of Korean Pop Culture, to help guide students in completing the assignment.

**Before Day Three**

Allow students to finalize the assignment and prepare for their presentation as homework if needed. Remind them to ensure they have any visuals they plan to use during their presentation (charts, diagrams, slides, posters, etc.) ready before the next class period.

**Day Three**

1. Ask students to convene in their groups. Give groups five minutes to prepare their presentation. Remind them to select one or two people to give a five-minute summary of their response to the rest of the class.

2. Allow approximately five minutes for each group to present a summary of their response to the rest of the class.

3. Once all groups have presented, ask the class to take a secret vote on which group’s presentation they found most compelling. Announce the result of the vote and then ask several students to share why they voted for the winning group.

4. Conclude the lesson by leading a discussion on the following questions, which Dr. Zur posed at the end of her video:
How do you believe technology will maintain South Korea’s edge in popular culture? Do you think it can ever be subverted?

There is no correct answer to these questions, so student responses will vary. Guide the discussion by ensuring that students point to evidence from the lecture or their research to justify their comments. Here are some points you may want to mention:

• Since at least the early 2000s, Korea has been one of the most digitized countries in the world, which has helped it apply cutting-edge technology to music and other cultural realms.

• Korea has stayed on the leading edge of using technology in entertainment, as Dr. Zur explained in her lecture.

• As Lee Soo-man, the head of SM Entertainment, mentioned in his 2022 lecture at Stanford, he has been working bringing entertainment to the metaverse and virtual realm for years.

• There’s a danger that an essential part of culture can be lost once it becomes too mechanized. As K-Pop moves into the metaverse, how will it be able to maintain the essential aspects of its culture? What will keep it uniquely “Korean”?

• The kihoeksa are not the only entertainment companies who have invested heavily in developing parallel universes of content; many other large companies, including Meta (formerly Facebook), are doing so.

Extension

If you would like your students to further research how technology is changing K-Pop, assign the following video and/or article, both from BBC 100 Women 2022:

• The Rise of the Virtual K-pop Princess (23 minutes): https://youtu.be/EdYm40shBSM

• “K-pop: The rise of the virtual girl bands,” BBC 100 Women, 12 December 2022.

Assessment

The following are suggestions for assessing student work in this lesson:

1. Evaluate student responses to Handout 2, Video Notes, based on Answer Key 4, Video Notes.

2. Evaluate group presentations in response to Handout 3, Applying Lessons from the Spread of Korean Pop Culture, based on Answer Key 5, Applying Lessons from the Spread of Korean Pop Culture.

3. Assess student participation in group and class discussions, evaluating students’ ability to

   • clearly state their opinions, questions, and/or answers;
   • provide thoughtful answers;
   • exhibit sensitivity toward different cultures and ideas;
   • respect and acknowledge other students’ comments; and
   • ask relevant and insightful questions.
INFLUENCE OF KOREAN POPULAR CULTURE IN CHARTS

1. Arrivals of international tourists to South Korea, in millions

![Graph showing arrivals of international tourists to South Korea from 1996 to 2020.](image)


2. Top reason given by non-Koreans who have a positive image of South Korea for viewing South Korea favorably, per a 2021 survey by the South Korean government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% of respondents who rated this most important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary culture, such as K-Pop and films</td>
<td>23.0 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean brands and products</td>
<td>13.2 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic status</td>
<td>10.2 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural heritage</td>
<td>9.5 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National character of Korea</td>
<td>8.6 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social system</td>
<td>7.8 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports, etc.</td>
<td>7.6 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS)
3. Number of students studying Korean language in U.S. universities

Number of students studying Korean rose 78% since 2009

Source: Modern Language Association

4. Change in number of students enrolled in courses to learn other languages in U.S. universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>822,148</td>
<td>861,015</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>789,888</td>
<td>−8.3</td>
<td>712,240</td>
<td>−9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>206,019</td>
<td>215,244</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>197,679</td>
<td>−8.2</td>
<td>175,667</td>
<td>−11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Sign Language</td>
<td>79,744</td>
<td>92,068</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>109,567</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>107,060</td>
<td>−2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>94,146</td>
<td>95,613</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>86,782</td>
<td>−9.2</td>
<td>80,594</td>
<td>−7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>65,410</td>
<td>72,357</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>66,771</td>
<td>−7.7</td>
<td>68,810</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>78,176</td>
<td>80,322</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>70,982</td>
<td>−11.6</td>
<td>56,743</td>
<td>−20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>51,382</td>
<td>59,876</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>61,084</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>53,069</td>
<td>−13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>24,010</td>
<td>35,228</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>35,526</td>
<td>−4.8</td>
<td>31,554</td>
<td>−5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>32,164</td>
<td>32,446</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>27,209</td>
<td>−16.1</td>
<td>24,866</td>
<td>−8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>24,784</td>
<td>26,740</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>21,979</td>
<td>−17.8</td>
<td>20,353</td>
<td>−7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek, Ancient</td>
<td>7,146</td>
<td>8,449</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>12,256</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>13,936</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>10,310</td>
<td>11,273</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>12,407</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9,827</td>
<td>−20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew, Biblical</td>
<td>14,137</td>
<td>13,764</td>
<td>−2.6</td>
<td>12,596</td>
<td>−8.5</td>
<td>9,587</td>
<td>−23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew, Modern</td>
<td>9,620</td>
<td>8,307</td>
<td>−13.6</td>
<td>6,698</td>
<td>−19.4</td>
<td>5,521</td>
<td>−17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Languages</td>
<td>33,800</td>
<td>39,349</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>34,746</td>
<td>−11.7</td>
<td>34,830</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,575,838</td>
<td>1,673,566</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>1,561,131</td>
<td>−6.7</td>
<td>1,417,921</td>
<td>−9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Modern Language Association
5. Number of U.S. universities offering Korean language courses

![Graph showing the number of U.S. colleges offering Korean rose 68% since 2002. Source: Modern Language Association.]

6. Annual enrollment in Korean Language Village, an intensive summer language camp in Minnesota, USA

![Graph showing KLV Enrollment Trends. Source: Dr. Dafna Zur (lecture).]
PRE-VIDEO QUIZ

Take 10 minutes to answer the questions below to the best of your ability. There’s no penalty for incorrect answers and you don’t need to turn this handout in. This is simply a way to gauge your current level of familiarity with Korean popular culture as well as popular culture in general.

1. What is “popular culture”?

2. What does the term “soft power” mean?

3. How does a country benefit from widespread global interest in its popular culture?

4. What is “hallyu”?

5. How would you rank your familiarity with the popular culture of these Asian countries? Rank the country whose popular culture is most familiar to you a “1” and rank the rest in descending order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(People’s Republic of) China</td>
<td>1,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republic of China (Taiwan)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United Nations; estimates from 2020
VIDEO NOTES

You are about to watch “Korea Gone Global: K-Pop and Technologies of Soft Power.” This 46-minute video lecture by Stanford professor Dr. Dafna Zur dives deep into the origins, features, consequences, and future of Korean popular culture. Dr Zur is an Associate Professor of Korean literature and culture in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures of Stanford University. She specializes in Korean literature, cinema, and popular culture. For more, see her profile at https://profiles.stanford.edu/dafna-zur.

PART 1: WATCH THE VIDEO(S)

Watch the video, “Korea Gone Global: K-Pop and Technologies of Soft Power.” There are several points in the video where Dr. Zur asks viewers to stop and view shorter videos. The table below contains links to these videos for your convenience.

You should reserve two hours to watch the main “Korea Gone Global” video and the additional videos below.

Links to Additional Music Videos (in order of mention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Year Released</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.O.T.</td>
<td>Candy, HOT</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kick It</td>
<td>NCT 127</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>3:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynote Address by Soo-Man Lee*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>16:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Aespa</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>4:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAKE UP (original concept video)</td>
<td>SAGONG_EE_HO</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>3:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAKE UP (debut concert video)</td>
<td>SAGONG_EE_HO</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>3:51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Start watching Lee Soo-man’s keynote address at 22:30 and end at 38:46

PART 2: ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

After watching the video, answer the questions on the following pages. Return to the video as needed to answer the questions correctly. For your reference, a list of key terms and a timeline are provided at the end of the handout.

Bring this completed handout to the next class period, where you will return it to your teacher for evaluation.
1. What examples of Korean popular culture are mentioned in the lecture?

2. What other examples, if any, would you add to that list?

3. What similarities and differences did you notice between the video from 1996 and the video from 2020 that Dr. Zur showed during her lecture?
4. What was your reaction to the two videos of the virtual K-Pop group SAGONG_EE_HO?

REFERENCES

Key terms (in order of mention)

**Soft power**—Power that stems from using technology and culture to exert influence globally, rather than military and economic force

**K-Pop**—shorthand term for Korean popular music. It usually refers more specifically to the specific genre of music characterized by hip-hop and foreign influence, large fandoms, and slickly-produced production

**Kihoecka**—Korean multimedia entertainment companies that operate as a record label, talent agency, music production company, event management and concert production company, and music publishing house

**SM Entertainment**—the largest entertainment company in Korea, founded by Lee Soo-man in 1995

**Hallyu**/“**Korean wave**”—the increase in the global popularity of South Korean popular culture—particularly K-Pop, K-dramas and Korean films—since the 1990s

**V-live**—shorthand for “virtual concert,” a performance in which performers are represented by virtual avatars. These can be real-life concerts where digital representations of performers are projected, or concerts given by avatars within virtual worlds.

**Naver**—South Korean’s most popular search engine

**Beyond Live**—online performance platform that provides real-time streaming of concerts, fan meetings, showcases, and other events of artists affiliated with SM Entertainment

**Metaverse**—an immersive, parallel virtual world focused on social connection and often facilitated by virtual reality and augmented reality headsets

**Idol system**—system in which aspiring artists in Korean pop music undergo intense training sponsored by an entertainment agency to maximize their chances of success. Unlike most musical artists in Western countries, K-Pop idols must closely follow the direction of their entertainment agency and do not debut until the agency decides
### Timeline of key events in the development of K-Pop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Seo Taiji and Boys, considered the first K-Pop group, forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>SM Entertainment, first <em>kihoeoksa</em> (entertainment company) is established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>YouTube is launched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2012</td>
<td>Korean singer Psy releases “Gangnam Style” song and music video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Netflix starts serving South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Netflix announces first original Korean show (<em>Mr. Sunshine</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>BTS becomes first musical act from Korea to have an album at #1 on the Billboard albums chart in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>Korean-language film <em>Parasite</em> wins the Oscar for Best Picture, the first time in history that a non-English-language film won the award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2021</td>
<td>BTS addresses the United Nations General Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>South Korean TV series <em>Squid Game</em> becomes the most-watched show in Netflix history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2022</td>
<td>Members of BTS visit White House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Aespa, first K-Pop group with their own AI avatars, launched</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPLYING LESSONS FROM THE SPREAD OF KOREAN POP CULTURE

The government of a country* with a limited global profile and influence has hired you to develop a national plan to elevate its soft power as South Korea has. You must prepare a presentation to this government that includes:

1) Explanation of factors that led to popularity of Korean popular culture
2) Delineation between replicable and non-replicable factors
3) Recommendation for five steps to take to start process

You will present this to your class during the following class period. Prepare your presentation as a group and choose one or two spokespeople to share it out during the next class period.

Your teacher will evaluate your response based on the following criteria:

• How clearly did you list the factors that led to the increased popularity of Korean popular culture?
• How clearly did you differentiate between replicable and non-replicable factors?
• How well do the five steps in your recommendations correlate with the factors that you say led to Korea’s success?
• How effectively did you cite evidence to support your arguments?
• How well did you integrate information from the video lecture and class discussions into your response?

* You may choose a specific country to profile if there’s one you know well; otherwise, you can prepare your presentation for a generic, unspecified country.
1. What is “popular culture”?

There are many definitions; the main ones include:

- Culture that is widely favored or well-liked by many people. This definition differentiates it from “high culture”
- Mass culture: hopelessly commercial; made for non-discriminating audiences; escapist fantasy
- Culture that originates from the people and is spontaneous, rather than imposed from above
- Culture that is neither imposed nor spontaneous, but produced through a process of negotiation between the two. Popular culture here is a site of resistance between subordinate groups resisting incorporation by dominant groups
- Finally, some believe that “popular culture” is an arbitrary category that has no fixed boundaries
- A “site where the construction of everyday life may be examined”

2. What does the term “soft power” mean?

Power that stems from using technology and culture to exert influence globally, rather than military and economic force, which are called “hard power”

3. How does a country benefit from widespread global interest in its popular culture?

- Increase in money spent on services created in that country
- More tourists to that country
- More people study aspects of the country, including but often beyond its culture
- More favorable view of the country and its culture in general
- Increased interest in learning that country’s language

4. What is “hallyu”?

Korean term for the “Korean wave,” the increase in the global popularity of South Korean popular culture—particularly K-Pop, K-dramas and Korean films—since the 1990s

5. How would you rank your familiarity with the popular culture of these Asian countries?

Rank the country whose popular culture is most familiar to you a “1” and rank the rest in descending order.

Each student will have their own ranking, so there’s no “correct” answer to this question. However, point out that some countries have a familiarity that’s much greater than would be expected given their population. This is one indication of “soft power.” Across the class, which country seems to best outperform its population in terms of soft power? For most English-language classrooms, South Korea will be the likely answer. (If not, you might discuss what makes this class’s responses different—perhaps there are many students who have ancestors from another country in the list.)
DEFINING SOFT POWER

1. What does the term “soft power” mean?
   • In the video lecture, Dr. Zur cites the following definition for power in a global context: “that which makes it possible to make other countries do what you want”
   • Traditionally, countries exerted power through population, resources, territory, economic size, and often military force. These have come to be known as “hard power.”
   • In 1990, Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power,” which refers to influence that stems from technology, art, education, and culture.
   • In 2022, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called South Korea “a global soft power pace-setter,” referring to the fact that it has been extremely effective in using the tools of soft power to increase its global profile and influence.

2. What are some potential types of evidence that a country has soft power?
   This is a partial but non-exhaustive list:
   • Percentage of people who have a favorable or positive image of that country
   • Interest in traveling to or moving to that country
   • Number of tourists to that country
   • Number of people who study or take formal courses in aspects of that country, including its history, economy, culture, and language
   • Number of views on videos related to that country
   • Uptake in people watching videos, shows, movies, or series made about the country or created in the country
   • Uptake in people reading books about the country and/or in the country’s main language
INFLUENCE OF KOREAN POPULAR CULTURE IN CHARTS

1. Arrivals of international tourists to South Korea, in millions
   This graph shows a clear increase in tourists to Korea until the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. The biggest increases were in the period from 2010 to 2014 or so. Tourism brings a lot of economic activity and helps generate better understanding of a country.

2. Top reason given by non-Koreans who have a positive image of South Korea for viewing Korea favorably, per a 2021 survey by the South Korean government
   “Contemporary culture” was by far the most common reason contributors cited for their positive image of South Korea, nearly twice as much as the second reason (Korean brands and products).

3. Number of students studying Korean language in U.S. universities
   The rise in students studying Korean in U.S. universities is exponential—it rose about 300% percent in the 20 years between 1996 and 2016.

4. Change in number of students enrolled in courses to learn other languages in U.S. universities
   There’s been a decrease in the number of university students studying most languages between 2006 and 2016. Between 2013 and 2016, the number of students studying every language declined with the lone exceptions of Korean, which increased by 13.7 percent, and Japanese, which increased by 3.1 percent.

5. Number of U.S. universities offering Korean language courses
   As you might expect, this graph closely tracks the rise in the raw number of students studying Korean in U.S. universities.

6. Annual enrollment in Korean Language Village, an intensive summer language camp in Minnesota, USA
   There’s more nuance in this graph, as enrollment fell from 2006 to 2012 before increasing again in 2013. The decline after 2006 tracks the Great Recession economic crisis that started in 2007 and 2008 and led many families to cut back on unneeded spending, like language academies.
Video Notes

1. What examples of Korean popular culture are mentioned in the lecture?
   - Taekwondo (and Korean martial arts in general)
   - Modern sports where Korea dominates like archery, short-track ice skating, and golf
   - Korean food
   - K-Pop
   - “Gangnam Style” by Psy
   - Korean cosmetics and beauty products (“K-beauty”)
   - Netflix hit show Squid Game
   - Korean dramas/serialized shows (Crash Landing on You, etc.)

2. What other examples, if any, would you add to that list?
   *Student responses will vary; potential examples include:*
   - “Baby Shark” (released by Korean entertainment company Pinkfong)
   - Oscar-winning movie Parasite

3. What similarities and differences did you notice between the video from 1996 and the video from 2020 that Dr. Zur showed during her lecture?
   *Potential responses include:*

   **Similarities:**
   - Focus on synchronized choreography with individual members occasionally stepping out to exhibit their own unique moves
   - Use of props
   - Bilingual lyrics (Korean and English)
   - Combination of sung and rapped verses

   **Differences**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Gimmicky videography</em></td>
<td><em>All members appear to be wearing makeup</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Juvenile nature</em></td>
<td><em>More of a “hard,” tough aesthetic</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Clownish, loose-fitting outfits</em></td>
<td><em>Group members wear similar clothing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>No dyed hair</em></td>
<td><em>Organized around a central theme (Chinese martial arts)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Live performance</em></td>
<td><em>Fast-paced beat, dancing, and videography</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Each member has a designated color for their costume</em></td>
<td><em>Dyed hair</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Some members have face paint</em></td>
<td><em>Matching outfits</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aesthetic of innocence</em></td>
<td><em>Clothes are luxurious/glamorous</em></td>
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answer key 4

4. What was your reaction to the two videos of the virtual K-Pop group SAGONG_EE_HO?  
   *Student responses will vary.*
APPLYING LESSONS FROM THE SPREAD OF KOREAN POP CULTURE

Evaluating students’ presentations involves some level of interpretation. Please use the following recommendations from the video as a starting point and feel free to develop your own criteria or rubric as needed.

1) **Explanation of factors that led to popularity of Korean popular culture**

**Support from the Korean government:**
- In the early 1990s, the government’s cultural industry policy shifted from one of political control over cultural industries to giving artists and creators more freedom.
- The South Korean government still views cultural industries as central to its export-focused economic development strategy.

**The kihoeska (entertainment conglomerates) which:**
- Can produce high production value at a much lower cost than more expensive countries, such as the USA, Japan, or France. They do everything in-house to keep costs down and make sure all elements of a group or artist are aligned.
- Produce (and encourage) a deep bench of talent, many of whom have trained and prepared for years to become idols.
- Are large enough to invest in training idols for years before they become professional entertainers who earn money.
- Serve as gatekeepers of quality.
- Can afford to give away freebies to boost interest in a group (V-live concerts, merchandise, etc.).
- Engage in strategic international marketing to identify gaps in the entertainment market they can fill.

**Technology and timing:**
- YouTube launched just as K-Pop was gaining steam, allowing free worldwide distribution of songs and videos.
- Social media has been vital to creating tight-knit fandoms, who become almost co-producers of songs.
- In recent years, Netflix has brought K-dramas and other series such as *Squid Game* to a worldwide audience.
- Kihoeska have been on the cutting edge of finding new ways to keep fans involved with their favorite groups, particularly during the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Content release strategy:**
- Kihoeska plan a multimedia blitz to accompany the launch of a new song or songs.
- The most successful groups release more than one version of each video (art film, a dance practice video, a video taking the viewer behind the scenes).
- Each song has text, visuals, and associated elements such as stage costumes and props tied to the release.
• Releases are promoted across several channels (YouTube, social media apps, concerts, talk shows, etc.)

Fan communities:
• Fans self-organize their communities through hash tags and social media tools
• Fans create many forms of content (reaction videos, dance cover performances, etc.), in effect becoming co-producers for each group/artist
• K-Pop stars invest a lot of time, energy, and creativity into connecting with their fans, often in real time

Other factors:
• The large Korean-American community in Los Angeles facilitated the flow of hip-hop culture and idioms to Korea in the 1990s
• K-Pop is a hybrid, flexible form that mixes Korean and English lyrics and uses global and multi-cultural references. This seems crucial to its influence; it’s hard to imagine K-Pop with only Korean or only English lyrics being as popular.
• K-Pop’s popularity has ensured there’s a large supply of youth, even beyond Korea, who spend years preparing to audition for an entertainment company in the hopes they’ll be one of the next K-Pop stars. There’s even a booming industry of K-Pop preparation schools in Korea that make the pipeline of future idols even more accomplished.

2) Delineation between replicable and non-replicable factors
The following factors from the list above are likely hard to replicate:
• Right mix between government encouragement/support but no heavy oversight, censorship, or direction
• By the early 2000s, Korea led the world in high-speed Internet deployment, making it easier for Korean fans and consumers to access digital entertainment
• Fortuitous timing of the introduction of key distribution technologies (YouTube, social media, Netflix)
• K-Pop fan communities are organic and heavily dependent on the perception of a close bond between the artists and the fans. This type of relationship is hard to plan or orchestrate.
• Influence of immigrant community in the hotbed of a new cultural wave (Korean Americans and hip hop in the 1990s)

3) Recommendation for five steps to take to start process
Recommendations will vary; some potential recommendations include:
• Hire executives from South Korea entertainment companies to start company in this country
• Find local entertainment entrepreneurs to open up talent academies
• Relax government control or direction over songs and popular culture
Okay, I’m going to be talking today about Korean popular culture, and I’ve titled my talk “Korea Gone Global: K-Pop and Technologies of Soft Power.” By the end of this talk, we will cover all of these different aspects: Korean popular culture, defining what that is, technology, soft power, and a little bit about the globalization of this phenomenon and what the future directions of it might be.

So I’d like to start by telling you a little bit about myself, and after that we’ll talk, define what K-Pop is, how its success has been measured, and what the future prospects are. So that’s the broad plan for today.

So I’ll start by telling you a little bit about my own personal story. I, when I was growing up, in ... I grew up in New York and in Jerusalem. And when I was growing up in the early 80s, it was the time of a boom of martial arts films. And I was a kid growing up at the time and was really intrigued by the many martial arts films that I was able to see. *Karate Kid* had just come out. There were, of course, all the Bruce Lee movies. And I became really intrigued by the idea that even as a kid or as a young girl, I could develop my mind and my body and protect myself and use my body almost like a weapon. But also I was really attracted to this idea of achieving a sort of inner peace or the kind of mental aspect of martial arts. And so that was something that really motivated me. I started practicing martial arts in my neighborhood.

And it was just by a stroke of destiny that the martial arts that I was sent to because it was the one that was most convenient to attend because it was in my neighborhood, was Taekwondo. I didn’t know at the time, I knew nothing about Korea, really. Like I said, I’d grown up in New York and then in Jerusalem since the age of three, and so really didn’t know very much. And I didn’t know that Taekwondo was even Korean, but when I started practicing Taekwondo, I started learning how to count. I learned the names of the kicks. And so Korea sort of entered my imagination as this place where Taekwondo was developed.

And after I went, I finished high school, I did my military service in Israel, and I decided before I went to college, I wanted to go and do Taekwondo in Korea. And so you see on this slide, this first slide, that is the Korea that I entered when I didn’t know anything about Korea, didn’t, you know ... as I said, the only thing I knew how to do was to count, and I had a few words, and I learned a few words of greetings. But I arrived one wintery day, in 1993, in December. And what I remember was just how bright the lights were at night. And I also remember all the many neon crosses that I passed along the way driving through downtown Seoul. So it was really kind of my first encounter with Korea was one that I didn’t expect at all. This next slide is a slide of myself and my other Taekwondo practitioners from my dojang. We participated in a lot of events, in competitions. I think in this particular picture I am a second-degree black belt. I went up to third degree black belt. Oh, here’s the arrow showing where I am exactly in this group, in case you didn’t find me in the picture.

The reason I like to start with this slide is to say that soft power, and I’ll explain the term a little bit later on, but this idea of soft power is a really, really powerful one. It is a way for nations like Korea to draw in interest from people from all over the world that can turn into a lifelong dedication, lifelong devotion, and interest and investment in learning things about Korea.

So when we talk about soft power today, of course we talk about K-Pop and how everyone now knows where Korea is. And you go to BTS concerts, and they’re speaking in Korean, and people are learning Korean, using different websites like Talk To Me In Korean. But the original form of
soft power, I believe, was martial arts. That is what got many of us interested, those of us who are not heritage speakers or heritage learners, that’s what got many of us interested in Korea to begin with. So martial arts is the original soft power.

So to continue to explain why I’m sitting here and talking to you about Korea Gone Global, I came to Stanford in 2012. And in 2012, something happened which I’ll talk about in a moment. A very famous video went viral. And following that, I became more and more interested in Korean popular culture as the thing that is really bringing in so much interest into Korean studies. Most recently, I was invited to SM Entertainment, one of the important, the pioneer corporation, entertainment company, to really kind of brand K-Pop and give us sort of the Korean popular culture form as we know it. So I was invited to SM. I met Mr. Lee Soo-man. I met the - you can see there’s a bottom, the picture on the bottom left is a picture of me with three members from NCT, Johnny, Jaehyun, and Mark. And on the top left picture is a picture of me and the Aespa girls. They had just come back from Coachella. So I had a really interesting, super fun time talking to all these celebrities. And it got me thinking more and more about what K-Pop is and what it’s, which direction it’s going in right now.

So what is this incident I’m talking about in 2012 that coincided with my start here at Stanford? That, of course, is the viral hit “Gangnam Style.” So “Gangnam Style” was published, I guess, or it was released in July 15, 2012, and for a time, it held the Guinness World Record for most liked video in YouTube’s history. Now, every year I like to go into YouTube or to Wikipedia and to see where Gangnam Style stands, comparatively speaking, with previous years. So this latest image that you can see here shows it at number ten. It may have fallen even more because Baby Shark has taken over the world along with some other viral videos.

But Gangnam Style was really remarkable because there had never been a Korean video to take the world by storm the way it had. And one of the reasons that this video was so popular and there are so many videos that you can look at on YouTube, people analyzing the video, talking about why it was as successful as it was, but one of the kind of fun things to kind of think about is how this particular video was very it lent itself to parody. So there are many videos that came in its wake that were produced by people that are kind of parodies of Gangnam Style. So, for example, there’s the Chipmunks, the Chipmunk style, the Mitt Romney style, Kim Jong-un style, zombie style. There’s even a really great Stanford style that was crafted in the manner of Gangnam Style that uses the entire Stanford campus to imitate the video from beginning to end. So really, lots of fun, a lot of people had fun doing their own version of Gangnam Style. So one of the reasons that this video is so successful is because it combined the kind of self-deprecating, poking fun at oneself that Psy, the artist Psy, really embodies with a more serious tackling of topics of socioeconomic inequality in this really fun, very catchy way.

So in this next slide, I challenge students to think about what is culture? You know, it’s really important when we think about a topic like popular culture, Korean popular culture, to come back to a very basic definition of terms. So Raymond Williams, a very famous Marxist theorist, called culture one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. And he came up with three broad definitions of terms.

The first is culture as a, I’m quoting, “general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development.” This is what Raymond Williams called the ideal. It is the way in which culture has been linked to civilization. So if you think about culture is that which is the representation of all that is best, what is seen as transcendental or everlasting about a culture. So if you think about intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic forms, you think about perhaps classical music or the great writings of the age, kind of spiritual developments. This is all kind of what we think of, one way that we think about culture is in its ideal forms.
The second way that Raymond Williams talks, or another way to think about culture, is as a particular way of life. So this is not necessarily culture as a material form, but a way of life. So, for example, you could have holidays are culture, sports culture, religious festivals. We talk about culture more freely, as ways of life. For example, Tiger Mom culture, right? I mean, a lot of our, we grow up in different households with certain ideals about studying and sports and play. So that’s a culture. So rather than if the first definition of culture is one that involves a kind of cultural production or material production, the second one is more of ways of life.

And then the third, which Raymond Williams uses to define culture, is material examples that are meant to be enjoyed, viewed, read, circulated and critiqued. And that has this more broader definition of culture. This is what he calls the documentary version. So again, if the first is an ideal, what culture is in kind of an ideal form, and the second is more the social form, the third is a documentary form. So these are the actual material objects that are circulated as part of culture. And so, again, I want us all to, when we think about when we talk about culture, to think about what culture means.

And really, again, to repeat Raymond Williams’ quote about culture being a complicated word, that means that we have to really think about what we mean when we say, when we talk about culture. So now that we’ve talked, we’ve introduced this idea of culture, let’s think about what popular culture is. Again, we’re trying to not take for granted the terms that we’re using. Really think consciously about how we’re using these terms and what they mean.

So what is popular culture? Again, there are many, many definitions, and I’m going to introduce the main ones. The first way that we talk about popular culture is culture that is widely favored and well-liked by many people. So popular culture comes to be defined against other things. So if high culture, remember what we talked about, the ideal in Raymond Williams’s terms. So popular culture may be something that has a very low bar of entry that people can enjoy, they can be exposed to, they don’t have to pay a lot of money, although that, of course, you can argue with that. But it’s a kind of form of culture that people, that there’s a general consensus that people really like.

Another definition of popular culture is culture that originates from the people, that is not imposed from above, but emerges from grassroots, from below. So popular culture is seen as culture that is really spontaneous, that’s authentic, that is made by people for like-minded people. So yet another definition of popular culture is a culture that is produced in the process of negotiation between the two. So you have subordinate groups that come up with their own culture, for example, and then they negotiate, or there’s this process by which that culture becomes more mainstream and perhaps even high culture. So it’s sort of not one or the other.

And finally, we could even say that pop culture or popular culture is a category that doesn’t really have any fixed contours. It’s something that changes, it’s slippery. In some period, something can be popular culture and then becomes high culture or it’s high culture that becomes a popular culture. A classic example of that is opera that starts out as popular culture.
and then becomes high culture over time. Or if we talked about popular culture as that which is made by people for people, so if you think about popular culture like fashion or some kind of sneakers that go from being something that’s for the masses, for the people and all of a sudden it becomes very, very expensive and inaccessible to a lot of people. So popular culture is this very slippery, shifty category and that’s something I want us to remember when we think about, when we say popular culture, what do we actually mean by that? So it’s something that we have to continue to interrogate as we use the term.

So one question that I want us all to start off with is why do we study popular culture at all? Why are we even talking about Korean popular culture? I mean, one reason, of course, is that many of us are drawn to Korean studies because we start with an interest in pop culture. But why? Is pop culture really a serious mode of, or a category of study?

And of course, I’m here because the answer to that is yes. And I want to introduce this quote from a book that I use to teach, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* by John Story. And he says the following: “Popular culture is a site where the construction of everyday life may be examined. The point of doing this is not only academic—that is, as an attempt to understand a process or practice—it is also political, to examine the power relations that constitute this form of everyday life and thus reveal the configurations of interests its construction serves.” In other words, we study popular culture not just because it’s fun and interesting and we get to talk about the celebrities that we like, but because it really reveals a lot about power. It reveals a lot about politics, about gender. And by taking a deep dive into popular culture, we can also critique it and see where the kind of capitalistic forces step in. What are we being sold? What is the image that we’re being sold? What are the products that are being sold? How can we be responsible consumers of popular culture? So it’s a really great topic of study.

So I like to start by challenging students to think about what Korean popular culture includes. And usually people will say, oh, it’s girl and boy bands like BTS. But there are other forms of popular culture that we are immersed in these days from Korea. One of them is, as I said, sports. Taekwondo but also, many of today’s golfers are Korean. I mean, golf isn’t Korean per se, but there are so many great Korean golfers today in the world of sports, short track skaters as well. Korea really dominates, also archery. So it’s really interesting to think about Korean sports, both in the way that Korea represents in players, but also traditional sports like Taekwondo. Korean food is a very popular form of culture. Cosmetics and Korean dramas, of course, are widely available. *Squid Game*, of course, was the recent big hit. Maybe some of our younger viewers haven’t seen it, it’s very, very violent, but hugely popular, as well as dramas like *Crash Landing on You*. Netflix is a very important platform for streaming Korean dramas, as are Hulu and other streaming services. So Korean popular culture is really a broad category that encompasses a lot of cultural forms. Not just K-Pop, not just singers and entertainers. So, so far I’ve covered the terms culture and popular culture, and I talked a little bit about what this category of Korean popular culture encompasses.

The next term I want to discuss is the term “soft power.” Soft power is a term that was made popular by a scholar named Joseph Nye, who published an article in 1990 in *Foreign Policy*. And in this article that he wrote in which he coined the term soft power, he writes, quote, “Power is changing in world politics.” In other words, power is that which makes it possible for you to make other countries do what you want. Rather than using brute force, military force, today, he observes, there are new forms of power that can be leveraged that are included in technology and communications.

Now, remember, this is in 1990. This is before the Internet. So Joseph Nye is anticipating that traditional forms of power—military, economic power—are being supplanted, replaced by new
forms of power that are not military, they’re not force, but they can really help shape, they can help shape power dynamics, they can make, they can attract people and tourists and interest in a way that military force cannot. And that is the origin of this term soft power. So Joseph Nye writes, quote, “A country that stands astride popular channels of communication has more opportunities to get its messages across and to affect the preferences of others.” So this is where he comes out with this term soft power. And as I said, it is, soft power is no longer using force, military and economic means of making other countries change their minds, but using culture and using technology and communication to do that in a much more effective way. And so that is in the 1990s, and so that helps us understand what soft power is and why, I think again, we think about Korean culture and the reason that students like you are listening to this lecture. It’s because South Korea has done something really remarkable over the last 20 years. It has managed to produce, it’s a small country by comparison, but it’s managed to produce some of the most compelling, high-quality culture, popular culture in the world. So one of the really tremendous achievements of South Korea over the last 20 years is that it has become the major producer of youth culture in the world. If you think about Korea as not, it has one of the biggest economies in the world, but the fact that Korea produces so much of the youth culture that is being consumed around the world today globally in North America, South America, all over Asia, all over Europe, in Africa, in Australia, South Korea has really made this remarkable inroads using soft power.

But I want to take a step back for a minute and think about how we got to this moment. Why is, I mean, one of the big questions in the field is how has South Korea managed to pull this off? And the reason for that question is both, you know, we’re curious how this has happened, but also a lot of countries want to know what is the secret to this success and can it be replicated? So that’s one of the questions I want to, you know, try and tackle today.

But I want to play a couple of videos just to show you again, to take a step back and see how we got to this moment, and go back to 1997 to a group called H.O.T. And I’m going to play a short video and just, you can just look at the first few minutes, and you can see where 1997, so that’s 30 years ago or so, a little bit under 30 years ago, where Korea was with its popular culture. So when you watch this video, think about what elements perhaps are the same or different from the previous video and just appreciate the distance that Korea has come in 30 years.

[Watch H.O.T. video]

All right, so now you had a chance to see H.O.T. and the video from 1997. And I’m going to play, by comparison, a video from NCT 127 of the song called “Yong-un.” So please take a moment to look at this video and see what elements perhaps are the same or different from the previous video and just appreciate the distance that Korea has come in 30 years.

[Watch NCT 127 video]

So you’ve seen these two videos, very different contrasting videos from 1997 and from the contemporary period. And I want us to now think about how did this happen? How did Korea go from 1997, from the video that we saw, to the present moment? And what I want to impress upon all of us is that really much of it is about, in my opinion, this is about technology and about timing.

So look at the dates that I’m presenting here on this slide about what, of what made it possible. SM Entertainment, the pioneer in the field, is established in 1995 in Seoul, followed by YG Entertainment in 1996, JYP Entertainment in 1997, Bighit, that’s BTS, the BTS company, established in 2005. So even before, in the first video that we saw from 1997, that’s happening
around the time that these corporations are starting to build up their arsenal, their know-how, and are starting to develop their brand, not just in a kind of a small way, but as an industry.

So YouTube is established in 2005. And what does YouTube do? It provides free access to high-quality music and video content, and it’s immediately spreadable in social media. So, in a way, we’re always asked, what happened to J-Pop? Why is J-Pop, how did J-Pop, Japanese pop culture, not ride this wave that Korea is riding? And a lot of it, I think, has to do with the timing. Korea, the Korean corporations, entertainment corporations, as you can see from this slide, were really established and ready to go when YouTube was formed in 2005.

So what is the business model? What makes Korean popular culture as effective, or how has it been able to be so successful? And a lot of it also has to do with government support. So, in the early 1990s, there was a departure in the Korean government policy, the cultural industry policy, from that of control, where the government was really trying to control the content and censor a lot of what it considered to be inappropriate content, to allowing cultural industries to thrive, viewing them as central to the export-focused development strategies. So the Korean government really recognized cultural industries as a really powerful form of export.

So again, I’m talking about the broader business model. The kihoeksa, the entertainment companies that I just introduced in the previous slide, they have, all of the industry is under one roof. They are gatekeepers, they have in-house training and they are a strategic international business export model of high quality and low price. Artists are sought out and groomed with an eye to specific markets and concepts. In other words, each K-Pop group is very consciously created to answer a certain perceived gap in the market. There’s extensive market research that goes into it. These are not, in any case, they’re not these spontaneous emergence of groups, but there’s a lot of deliberate marketing research that goes into creating each group. And the music is also this massive collaborational effort. Each title track has at least one composer and lyricist, stylist, choreographer and video director. So, for example, BTS’s “I’m Fine” lists twelve writers. So there is just a massive industry, very complex, a lot of different actors. And it is by no means just a one-person act.

Another aspect of Korean popular culture that contributes to its success is this elaborate training system. It’s very, very popular. A lot of Koreans are interested in becoming K-Pop stars. And you have, in the manner of the cram schools in Korea that are academically focused, you also have entertainment cram schools that teach dancing and performance. And there is no shortage of young people that are interested. So as you can see from this slide, this is a New York Times article about Korea’s K-Pop cram schools. There are some really interesting documentaries about the training, and there are also dance, now that, of course, we’re in pandemic times, the whole field of online dance studios that also take their dance classes into your living room have become more and more popular. One of the most popular ones is this 1 Million Studio. And so there are these kinds of dance schools all over Seoul. So that’s just to say that if we think about the different components that go into the success of K-Pop: the government support, there are the kihoeksa, the entertainment companies that have developed the K-Pop system into an art form, into a very savvy business model that keeps costs down and quality up. And there’s endless, endless amount of demand. Young people are interested in going into this industry and there’s a tremendous amount of talent, not just in Korea, but all over the world. The entertainment companies go out into the world and scout for talent in every country in the world. And so there’s really an endless demand, endless supply as well, of talent for these industries.

The content release is also really interesting and very deliberate. So usually you’ll have a song that is released. There’s a lot of heavy promotion and high-quality music video that comes with it. There’ll be multiple versions of a song. There’s practice, there are reaction videos, there are
promotions across multiple channels. Not just YouTube, but every possible channel that is part of Korean pop culture will also release different versions. There are associated props, there’s material objects, fashion and it’s just a tremendous amount of complex elements that go into release of a song. So don’t think of it as just one song that is released, but there’s this incredibly complex ecology that surrounds the release of each song.

Another thing that you cannot leave out when you talk about the success of Korean popular culture and globalization, how Korean popular culture has become as big as it has, how it’s become global, are the fans. The fans are, obviously they form because they love the content, but social media has made it possible for people to connect like never before. And fans become almost co-producers of Korean content. So, of course, on the production side, the entertainment companies are creating content. And again, this lecture is a really good opportunity for us to think about what it is that’s so successful. Why is it so compelling, why do we, why is it addicting? Why do we love this content so much? But the fans are also a really important impetus and almost like co-producers.

So they engage with one another. They create content. They create reaction videos, dance cover performances, and they also draw boundaries around their communities. They make sure that fans are behaving properly. Everyone loves their celebrities, but they don’t like it when fans get overly zealous and start booking flights, with the same flights as their celebrities, they start stalking their celebrities. So fans are also very protective of their celebrities. And there’s also a tremendous amount of political activism that’s been very interesting to observe, ways in which K-Pop fans have participated in Black Lives Matter movement, in online fundraising and organization. Fans have been active in different political campaigns in the Philippines, in the United States, all over the world. And so fans are really also a big part of the story of the success and globalization of Korean popular culture.

And so just to recap some of the elements I’ve been talking about, how K-Pop works, why it’s been so successful. You have a deep bench of talent and also long-term investment by the government and by the company. You have a high production value, a lot of really talented people contribute to the creation of each and every one of these products. You have free content. So think about the fact that there’s a tremendous amount of resources go into producing a video, but then it’s all put on free on YouTube for people to consume in other channels. And so the profit is really made in concerts and through the sales of merchandise.

You have the strong, loyal fan communities that work together through channels like V-live, through Naver, celebrity live streaming apps, et cetera. And the content is continuously successful because it has this flexible hybrid elements. There’s a lot of use of English, there’s a lot of use of multicultural references, but there’s also a lot of Korean. And I think that that’s one of the reasons that fans continue to be really attracted to Korean popular culture. If it were only in English, I don’t know that it would be as successful. The fans are really ready and excited about the Korean-particular content that is part of K-Pop.

So how far have we come? You can see in this slide, K-Pop stars are spokespersons for UNICEF, BTS was in the UN, it was recently also in the White House. Korean popular culture in general is a major driver of tourism and it also is, Korean popular culture has been a major driver of technological innovation, particularly in the wake of the pandemic.

The pandemic has actually created really unique challenges. As I said before, K-Pop really makes much of its profit in its live concerts. Well, we haven’t been able to go to live concerts in a long time. So then you get something like Beyond Live, which are these massive productions using technology to make fans feel like they are in the room, in a concert hall, in a venue without
actually being there. And all of the really cool innovations that K-Pop has made in the industry using technology.

So to end my lecture, I want to think about where, what are the future directions of Korean popular culture. One of the ways that we’ve really seen Korean popular culture carrying forward Korean studies is in the huge boom of interest in Korean popular culture. I see that in my work in the summers in the Korean Language Village. I’ll talk about that in a second. But you can see from this next slide, Korean, this is a slide from a survey from the MLA, the Modern Language Association, of the different languages, of the popularity of different languages, foreign languages. Korean is up compared to all other languages are going down in terms of interest. Korean is only on its way up. And I can see that in my work in the Korean Language Village, *Sup Sogui Hosu*, a lot of our students here today maybe have come through my program, but this is a program for children that are ages 8 to 18, young students who are interested in learning Korean in an immersion environment. And our enrollments, our enrollment trends really reflect the interest of Korean popular culture in the world. So you can see in this slide of enrollments, we experienced a dip in enrollments around the financial crisis of 2007-2008. And in recent years, we have more interest, more demand than we have space in our program. So that’s about some of the benefits that we can see or some of the long-lasting effects of Korean popular culture.

But where is all of this going? There’s always a kind of, like to kind of debate in the field, about whether Korean popular culture is going … if we think about a wave, it’s been talked about as a wave, well waves crest and then they fall, and so is this going to go away anytime soon? So I want to draw your attention to a lecture that was given recently at Stanford by Lee Soo-man, the CEO and founder of SM Entertainment, where he talks about cultural technologies and the system that he established. And so you can take your time in watching this video. What I want you to observe is how he perceives the future of Korean popular culture. And so if you listen to Lee Soo-man, and I encourage you to watch the video in its entirety, it’s a really interesting video where he talks about this idea of cultural technology.

[Watch Lee Soo-man keynote address]

So if we go back to the beginning of the lecture where I talked about culture as that which is perhaps, in Raymond Williams’ formulation, the ideal, what is the best, the best that is produced by people? And then we think about cultural technologies, that which Korea has really perfected into an art, which is bringing together music, fashion, aesthetics, and technology into this formulation of cultural technology, really think about, well, what is this? First of all, is this desirable? Is this a good thing? Is it really, once culture turns into cultural technologies and it becomes kind of something that is for profit, what do we lose? What do we gain? And I think that the important point is that technology is, of course, here to stay, and technology is really driving a lot of the innovations.

I talked a little bit before about how K-Pop has changed or the industry has changed in the wake of the pandemic, the fact that technology had to evolve in order to allow more people to participate in concerts once we couldn’t do that in person. And one of the prime examples of the new direction of K-Pop is this group called Aespa. You can see their picture here on the slide. They are a group of four women who also have avatars and they perform with their avatars together. You can see their most recent release is “Girls,” the music video. And you can see how they’re interacting with their avatars, where they’re one moment they’re together in person, the second moment they’re there with their avatars. So it’s part of the development of a concept in SM of this metaverse, of an entire universe that is a parallel universe to our own. And that is the
concept that SM is pursuing. And in fact, many Korean industries, entertainment industries, are pursuing.

[Watch Aespa video]

So again, technology has become really central to Korean popular culture, developing every industry. Every entertainment company is developing its own kind of parallel universes of offline and online content. And that is something that we’re going to continue to see.

Another really interesting and very recent development is of entirely virtual K-Pop groups. So if SM and other entertainment companies are trying to think about how to extend the virtual and the real and have them interact with one another, there are companies now, for example, this one that introduced a new group called 402 that are composed completely of virtual characters. And I’m going to show you two videos. The first is the original concept video of these characters. It tells a little bit about their story. It’s a music video, they’re singing, they’re dancing. You’ll see a lot of those elements that we love in K-Pop, really smooth moves, but it’s all virtual.

[Watch first SAGONG_EE_HO video]

The second video that you’re going to see is the initial performance, the debut of this group on a real stage. So just think about that for a second. The video that you’re going to see is virtual characters, avatars, performing on a real live stage. And, you know, this is sort of the new world of Korean popular culture where technology is creeping in. It’s already part of regular life in Korea and part of the K-Pop industry, but now we’re actually seeing virtual characters, virtual entertainers taking perhaps the place of real flesh and blood K-Pop characters or K-Pop entertainers.

[Watch second SAGONG_EE_HO video]

When I was in Korea and I interviewed the people that are behind this new development, one of the kind of issues that comes up when you talk about Korean entertainment and the Korean entertainment industry is that there are, K-Pop performance is hard work. It’s very physically demanding. You have to train many, many years. And human beings are flawed, and we all get old. And so there’s sort of this push to think about, well, how can virtual characters, how can technology then maintain that youthful aspect and maintain the purity of K-Pop? So this is the newest development.

So I’m going to end my lecture by proposing a few discussion questions for the students today. Knowing the formula of South Korea’s success, do you think that others can reproduce it in the same way? Why or why not? In other words, I talked in this lecture about what it is that made K-Pop so successful. Well, now that we know, can anyone do that? Can anyone establish that in the same way that South Korea has, and do you think they would be successful? The second question is where is technology going? If technology is developing the way that it is, will it maintain South Korea’s edge? Is this something that you think could ever get in the way of South Korea’s success? So the second question is around technology. And the third question that’s related is metaverse and virtual reality. Do you think that this is really a positive direction? And where can we see this going in the next ten years? So these are some questions to think about after the lecture.

I have a couple of slides here, the next one which is about writing on K-Pop in English. So if you want to learn more, who are some of the scholars, the main scholars that are writing about Korean popular culture? Here are some of their names. And also for those students who are thinking about writing papers on Korean popular culture, what are some of the fields that
people are writing on? So the idol system and the K-Pop industry, gender and race in Korean popular culture is a really interesting field. Fandom and political activism, I talked about that a little bit. Technology, as I said, Beyond Live, the metaverse, and all the things that are K-related: beauty, food, sports, and fashion, these are all genres of Korean popular culture that really, I think, are deserving of our attention.

So that’s all I have for today. If you have any questions, here’s my email, and I hope that this spurs a lot of really good discussion. Thank you very much.