

Lexicon of love adapts to times

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Staff Writers

Korean dating has evolved over the years, and along with it, the vocabulary to describe the complexities and variations of modern courtship.

It used to be that one met a potential spouse through *seon*, or a formal blind date arranged by elderly members of the family. According to Lim Sun-young at Sunoo, one of the fore-runners of the matchmaking service business, *seon* is an age-old tradition.

In fact, many elderly couples today met through *seon*. An unofficial poll of her friends by Song Hee-jung, a JoongAng Daily intern, finds that many couples in their 50s and up from the provinces are in arranged marriages, or what is called *jungmae gyeolhon*. In contrast, generally couples in their 50s and up from Seoul married for love, *yeonae gyeolhon*.

As dating became less and less formal, the "-ting" ending was used to describe these new styles of courtship.

The dating format began changing in the 1970s, with university students who felt stifled by the old ways and wanted something less formal. There was no suitable Korean word to describe the new social scene, so they called this casual dating "meeting." Basically, a "meeting" in Korean referred to a casual group date among college students.

In coffee shops near universities, group dates could be easily spotted in the evenings or weekends. Rows of young women and men sat face-to-face over a drink and chose a partner.

Such "meetings" thrived among college students. The proximity of Ewha Womans University to Yonsei University helped drive the dating revolution in an otherwise conserva-

tive society.

"Everyone in one major at Ewha would go on a group 'meeting' with everyone in another major at Yonsei," says O Mi-kyung of Duo, a matchmaking service that opened in 1995.

Ms. Lim, who graduated in 2002, says that when she was in college, "meeting" involved four girls and four guys. "You have to go to a meeting during your college years. It's part of the college culture," she says.

To this day, going on a "meeting" is a rite of passage for all young adults, and not just university students. But for some, group dates started to get old.

As a result, *sogaeting*, or a one-on-one blind date set up by friends, began growing in popularity. *Sogaeting* and regular "meeting" were, and still are, much more casual and popular than *seon*.

But there were some drawbacks. Without *seon*, which meant your family checked out the other party before the date, it was much harder to know whether a partner was trustworthy.

Then people turned to a professional go-between, dubbed "Madame Ddu," who claimed to have a list of the more eligible marriage partners. If the match was a success, the Madame Ddus were rewarded handsomely.

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, matchmaking companies developed around these Madame Ddus. The Korean economy was taking off, and people from the provinces with new money were looking to meet people from the city, while wealthy families were looking for successful matches.

For an annual fee of 800,000 won (\$676) or more, the matchmaking companies offered clients opportunities to meet people they would otherwise not meet.

Sunoo launched in 1991, based on the trust system. The company would screen clients, asking for birth, property and job certificates.

Whether matchmaking companies make dating any easier is debatable.

Yim Kyung-bin, 33, who is now looking for a wife, is a member of Sunoo.

"It's hard to meet the right woman since they all want to get their money's worth. Nobody settles down and everybody has high expectation," he says.

The late 1990s were a boom time for matchmaking businesses. It was also the advent of the Internet age, so it was only natural that online dating services would develop, such as Match.com, which has a mirror site in Korean and boasts 9 million members around the world.

Seong-euk O'Hare was one of them. "After looking at a profile of a really hot girl, I signed up for a one-month membership," he says. Although reliability is not as high as off-line matchmaking companies, he says online dating is more casual and less demanding.

Today, there are countless dating options and an ever-flexible lexicon to describe them (see list at right). But one thing remains a constant: terms that end with "-ting."

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Kim Soo-young contributed to this story.



Korean Dating Terminology

Bangting

"Bang" means "room" in Korean. Takes place in condominiums in resort areas. Dial random room numbers and arrange for a group date.

Beongaeting

Made popular since the mid-1990's when the use of Internet chatting spread. A man and a woman arrange a date in a chatting room and meet later in real life.

Chatting

Dating through the Internet.

Daeta

Last-minute backup member for a group date.

Dokkibyeong

People who are narcissists. Derived from the word *dokki*, or ax, because they think they're constantly being hit on.

Eoljjang

A person with an attractive face. *Jjang* is a slang derived from *jang*, which means "the chief."

Eolkkwang

A person with an unattractive face. *Kkwang* means whammy.

Gongjubyeyong

A princess syndrome. A woman who expects a man to treat her as if she were a princess.

Haekpoktan

An atomic bomb (look under *poktan*). A total mood killer.

Hunting

The act of looking for a date. Often,

this involves walking or driving through streets packed with young people, and then chatting up an interesting person. Rodeo Drive in Aggujeong-dong is a famous "hunting" ground.

Jageop

The process of matchmaking, or literally, "working on someone." "Jageopjung" is a guy's term for "working on a girl."

Jungmae

An old-fashioned term for arranged dates.

Meeting

A casual group date. Often the same number of males and females get together.

Momjjang

A person with a pleasing physique.

Momkkwang

A person with a terrible figure.

Noyeting

Usually takes place in nightclubs as a form of entertainment. Men are lined up in a mock auction. A winner claims ownership of the man for the day.

Ponting

Flirtation over the phone in search of a potential date.

Poktan

The American slang "bomb" refers to a hot woman, but in Korean, *poktan*, or bomb, refers to an unattractive person.

Poktan-jegeo

A guy who is responsible for getting

rid of the *poktan* (see previous entry).

Sagiting

Derived from the Korean word "sagi," or "to slander." When dates lie about their personal information, such as age or background.

Seon

A formal date arranged by friends, relatives or marriage brokers for people who are serious about getting married. Sometimes money is exchanged.

Seonting

A casual way of meeting a potential spouse without the presence of matchmakers.

Sogaeting

Looking at each other's image while chatting online.

Seonsu

The word means "an athlete," but in Korean dating lingo, it refers to an "expert" in dating.

Suryutan

A type of *poktan* (see entry on *poktan*). Literally, "hand grenade."

Videoting/Hwasang chatting

Looking at each other's image while chatting online.

Wangjabyeyong

Literally, "prince syndrome." A man who expects a woman to treat him as if he were a prince.

Yeo-u

The Korean word for "fox," which refers to a sly or catty woman. An extremely manipulative woman is called *bulyeo-u*, or a fearsome fox.

Illustration by Bae Min-ho



Herbal remedies keeping noses busy

By Limb Jae-un
Staff Writer

As the "well-being" craze continues to grow in Korea, aromatherapy is gaining popularity. Natural scents are said to enhance the immune system and relax mind and body, but squeezing in time for a retreat to the mountains amid hectic schedules and traffic-clogged roads is no easy task for city dwellers.

Herbal remedies are one way to inhale nature's scents without having to venture into the woods. Burning herbal candles or sticks is the most common way of enjoying herbs.

Another popular option is to put a few drops of herbal oil in a pot of water, then heat the pot to generate a pleasant scent. Now, in addition to natural herbal sticks and oils, scented as lavender, bergamot, rose and peppermint, you can also find herb-scented cosmetics and other body care products on store shelves.

Lavender and chamomile are said to

release tension and promote sleep. Putting a few drops of these oils on a cloth and laying the cloth beside your pillow is believed to induce sleep. Another way to relax those muscles is to put 10 to 20 drops in hot water during a hot bath.

Aromatherapy rituals like placing an herbal-scent emitting stone into a humidifier or air conditioner, or spraying herbal scents in the air, are also growing in popularity.

Medicinal uses of herbs are also gaining recognition. Some physicians are recommending aromatherapy as a supplementary measure to strengthen metabolism and blood circulation and treat medical conditions.

"Aromatherapy not only helps suppress inflammation and bacterial growth but also strengthens one's immune system, and is an effective supplementary procedure to treat colds," said Dr. Kim Jong-ung, an internist.

Computerized herb scent dischargers are being installed in some apartment complexes in Korea. The dischargers emit different scents depending on the room. The scents

emitted in the bedroom are devised to promote sleep while those in a study are intended to reinforce concentration.

"Some apartment dwellers with respiratory conditions such as chronic nasal ailments have noticed improvement in breathing after using a eucalyptus scent," said Ahn Mi-sook, an official at Aroma Solution, the manufacturer of the dischargers.

Gynecologists have waved the aromatherapy banner too, using it to reduce mothers' pain during delivery. Doctors at the CHA General Hospital chain reported that oil massage applied to the stomach or waist have a tranquilizing effect on the mother and cut down the average delivery time. At Hyeimin General Hospital in Seoul, some patients suffering from severe menstrual cramps have been successfully treated with aromatherapy.

Despite its benefits, aromatherapy needs to be used with care. Herbal oils must not be applied directly to eyes. Excessive use of herbal therapy could also aggravate asthma. jbiz91@joongang.co.kr



Left, a pregnant woman has an herbal oil applied to her wrist. At right, a high-tech device automatically releases a scent in a home.

[JoongAng Ilbo / Aroma Solution]

Herb
Orange, lavender
Rosemary, peppermint
Chamomile, lavender
Bergamot, lemon
Marjoram
Ylang Ylang, peppermint
Fennel, patchouli
Lavender, peppermint
Chamomile
Lavender, eucalyptus,
Tea tree, thyme
Geranium, eucalyptus

Effects
Relaxes body and mind and eases anxiety
Clears mind and enhances concentration and memory
Stabilizes nerve system, relieves fatigue and assists sleeping
Relieves depression and lifts mood
Soothes headaches and clears mind
Stabilizes mood and creates a romantic atmosphere
Increases appetite
Boosts energy
Reduces menstrual pain
Enhances immune system and prevents colds
Drives away insects such as mosquitoes or flies
Suppresses bacterial activity

Source: Aroma Solution Co.