

# The words of a new generation

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The term "N Generation" ("N" standing for "net") refers to young Koreans whose lives revolve around the Internet, and digital technology in general. Back in the late 1990s, it was mostly people in their early 20s who were immersed in the cyberworld, but nowadays, it's a broader demographic.

Park Ha-jeong, a communications manager for L'oréal Korea's consumer products division, is in her 30s but has an N Generation lifestyle. If a new digital development is catching on with 16-year-olds, Ms. Park probably knows about it too.

She just upgraded her digital camera to a new Sony, and sends pictures to her friends via e-mail or mobile phone. She also maintains a home page on one of the major Korean online portals, so her friends can look at her pictures and leave comments.

For people like Ms. Park, going overseas can be frustrating. "I had a very hard time finding a computer," she says of a recent business trip to Paris and New York. "Even if I found one, it was so slow and outdated — like Korea 10 years ago." When they're away from this uniquely wired society, N Generation Koreans can find themselves missing that sense of being part of a community.

Part of the appeal of the virtual life is its sense of anonymity and freedom. If you're fluent in its language and manners, you can hide behind an "avatar," or online alter ego, and adopt any age, gender or other characteristic you like. But at the same time, using that Internet-specific lingo makes an anonymous user part of a community — one that's getting broader all the time.

You can find thousands of examples of N Generation slang listed on online portals like Naver. The terminology comes from Korean, English and Japanese, from online games, Web sites and TV shows. More often than not, the terms are short and snappy — not surprising for people who do so much of their communicating in chatrooms and through text messages.

How proficient are you in this virtual language? Here's a checklist to help you get up to speed. Warning: Things change so fast that these terms might be outdated by the time you try to use them.

## First, test your knowledge

For each of the following questions, choose the most appropriate answer.

- Can I have some of your *dotori* (acorns)?  
a) What are you talking about?  
b) I haven't been hiking in a while.  
c) Sorry, I'm all out too.
- Do you ever do any molting?  
a) Do I look like a bird to you?  
b) You mean "melting"?  
c) My husband and I have no secrets.
- Why didn't you call me? I was in Bangladesh all weekend!  
a) Then why were you expecting a call?  
b) Okay, where were you, really?  
c) How boring.
- Are you a pigeonist?  
a) I don't know what that means, but it sounds creepy.  
b) Pigeons? I can take them or leave them.  
c) Yes, that's why I drink so much coffee.
- Have you seen the latest Roh Moo-hyun happgal?  
a) What's a happgal?  
b) Who's Roh Moo-hyun?  
c) Yeah, it's really funny.
- Have you ever done a yangting?  
a) I'm not into yoga.  
b) I haven't been on a date in a while.  
c) Sure, but no one ever notices.
- How do you handle keyboard warriors?  
a) What movie are you talking about?  
b) Why do they need my help?  
c) Ignore them.
- Who is your BF?  
a) You know I don't have a boyfriend.  
b) My beef?  
c) I've known her since grade school.
- I love your skin. How did you do that?  
a) Just soap and water.  
b) It comes from my mother, actually.  
c) My friend helped me.
- Did you know that so-and-so has a Lolicom?  
a) Sounds delicious.  
b) That's a new computer, right?  
c) Really? I had no idea.

Answers: Count your a), b) and c) answers. If most of your answers were c), you are probably a full-fledged member of the N generation. If they were a) or b), you have some catching up to do.

## A Lexicon of Virtual Language

**AI** The Korean word for "egg." Eggs are units of virtual credit used to send text messages via mobile phone; they can be transferred to another user.  
*Example: Can I have some of your ai? I ran out of mine for this month.*

**Alba** A part-time job (from the Korean word for it, "arbeit," which itself was borrowed from the German language).  
*Example: It's time to go to my alba, see you later.*

**Anti** Slander of, or opposition to, a particular idea, person or group.  
*Example: He's got a lot of anti on his homepage.*

**Bangladesh** From *bang*, the Korean word for "room," this is used by young people to mean being stuck in their rooms.  
*Example: I've been in Bangladesh all summer.*

**Beongae** Means "lightning" in Korean; refers to an offline meeting arranged immediately.  
*Example: Should we beongae?*

**BF** Best friend. (Pronounced "bi-epu" in Korean.)  
*Example: When can I meet your BF?*

**Cyber-ingyeok** *Ingyeok* means "personality"; refers to someone who has completely different manners online.  
*Example: I had no idea that smooth "X-man005" was our classmate Chang-su. What a cyber-ingyeok!*

**Cycher** "Cyber" + "teacher"; means a teacher in an online class.  
*Example: My cycher makes horrible mistakes all the time.*

**Cyjil** To spend a lot of time in the Cyworld online community (*jil* refers to a repeated action).  
*Example: Cyjil again? Do you know what time it is?*

**Damage dealer** In video shooting games, a tough character with a muscular physique.  
*Example: Watch out, we're dealing with two damage dealers out there.*

**Dicajok** People who take their digital cameras everywhere. ("Dica" is short for "digital camera"; *jok* refers to a group of people.)  
*Example: This model will be a hit among dicajok.*

**Digital nomad** People who are always carrying around PDAs, notebook com-



Illustration by Bae Min-ho

puters, digital cameras, MP3 players and the like.  
*Example: The Gwanghwamun Starbucks is full of digital nomads these days.*

**Dotori** Korean for "acorn." Acorns are virtual credit used in Cyworld, transferable among users.  
*Example: Can I borrow some of your dotori?*

**Duppie** A takeoff on the word "yuppie"; it means a depressed urban professional.  
*Example: I work with a lot of duppies.*

**E-line** A beauty ideal; it refers to someone whose jaw, seen in profile, resembles the letter "E."  
*Example: She's got a perfect E-line.*

**E-pal** An e-mail pen pal.  
*Example: Where can I post an ad looking for e-pals?*

**E-sports** Organized video game competitions and leagues.  
*Example: E-sports is a promising industry in Korea.*

**Fam** From "family"; refers to people who develop a sense of belonging from chatting or playing games online.  
*Example: Are you a SimCity fam?*

**FPS** "First person shooter." A video game played from the perspective of a character shooting at targets.  
*Example: I'm into FPS games these days.*

**Freeter** "Freelancer" + "arbeit"; a free-wheeling young person who refuses to work full-time.  
*Example: My uncle is a freeter and he will be until he dies.*

**Gamtizen** "Game" + "citizen." Game players in virtual communities.  
*Example: Once the Web site opens, we're expecting visits by at least 15,000 gamtizens per hour.*

**Gwichanista** A person who feels that everything in life is pointless.

(*Gwichanta* means "to not want to bother" in Korean.)  
*Example: You sound like a gwichanista. What's happening with you?*

**Gwiyeoni** Pen name of a popular online novelist. Gwiyeoni-style novels employ a lot of Internet jargon and emoticons (icons depicting emotions).  
*Example: Can we use the Gwiyeoni phenomenon in our marketing?*

**Happgal** "Hapseong" + "gallery." *Hapseong* in Korean means digitally altering an image.  
*Example: When did Madonna ever wear hanbok? That's just a happgal.*

**Hompi** A personal home page.  
*Example: Sun's hompi has got hundreds of regular visitors.*

**Jokkeon mannam** Literally means "conditions meeting"; refers to a match made through the Internet when a woman posts an ad specifying the age, height and other characteristics of a man she wants to meet.  
*Example: I went out on a jokkeon mannam yesterday.*

**JQ** An acronym for "janmeori quotient" (a takeoff on IQ). *Janmeori* means shallow tricks.  
*Example: You know, Jun has a high JQ, and the sad truth is, everyone knows it.*

**Keyboard warrior** A person who is outspoken and aggressive online, but withdrawn and timid in real life.  
*Example: Don't be afraid of the kids who posted those nasty messages — they're just keyboard warriors.*

**Kkal** A girlfriend. (Literally, "girl.")  
*Example: You have a kkal?*

**Lolicom** "Lolita" + "complex." When a man is infatuated with pretty young girls.  
*Example: He's married to an older woman, but he has a Lolicom online.*

**Mind virus** A person's or group's idea, usually not so beneficial to society, that becomes influential.

*Example: That manifesto sounds like a mind virus to me.*

**Molting** To chat secretly online. (From the Korean word *mollae*, which means "secretly.")  
*Example: Sam gets a kick out of molting with lonely housewives.*

**Mother attack** When a mother interferes with her child's online activities.  
*Example: Gotta go — I've got a mother attack.*

**Namchin** Boyfriend (shortened from the Korean word for it, *namjachingu*).  
*Example: Where is your namchin today?*

**Newbie** A newcomer to online life, usually annoying to veterans.  
*Example: All these newbies are getting on my nerves.*

**Nestingjok** Young people who value home and family life.  
*Example: I hope my next girlfriend will be a nestingjok.*

**Netizen** "Net" + "citizen." A member of a virtual community.  
*Example: Foreign English teachers have been taking some heat from netizens lately.*

**Nunting** *Nun* means "eyes" in Korean; "-ting" comes from "meeting." To visit chatrooms or message boards and read what other people have written.  
*Example: I went nunting at our chatroom and I saw your note.*

**Pigonist** A person who is chronically exhausted. (From *pigonhada*, Korean for "to be tired.")  
*Example: I've become a pigonist since I moved away from home.*

**P Generation** P stands for "participation, passion and potential power." This term was coined after many young people rooted enthusiastically for Korea during the 2002 World Cup.  
*Example: I know you're an N Generation, but I consider myself more of a P Generation.*

**Pumpeujil** Means "pump it up"; refers to stealing copyrighted information from one homepage or Web cafe to use on another.  
*Example: I liked the content so much that I'm going to pumpeujil, sorry.*

**Rehai** To say hello again after a short break ("re-hi").  
*Example: Rehai, what are you doing now?*

**Sektizen** "Sex" + "netizen." People who only visit X-rated Web sites.  
*Example: Will this site appeal to anybody but sektizens?*

**Shyotarocom** "Shyotaro complex"; refers to a woman infatuated with pretty young boys. The name comes from a young boy in a Japanese comic book.  
*Example: Since she saw that Thai film, Mi-yeon has developed shyotarocom.*

**Skin** Background design for a personal homepage.  
*Example: I love your skin — where did you get those images?*

**TMI** "Text message injury"; slang for carpal tunnel syndrome.  
*Example: I have a bad case of TMI. What should I do to alleviate the pain?*

**Welbinjok** Someone who tries to follow the "well-being" fad, but is something of a cheapskate about it. (*Bin* means "poverty" in Korean.)  
*Example: Yu-jin, the notorious welbinjok, has been saving up spa coupons.*

**Yadong** Short for *yahan dongyeongsang*, Korean for "raunchy online video."  
*Example: This site is loaded with yadong.*

**Yangting** *Yang*, which means "both" in Korean, combined with "meeting." This means two or more simultaneous online conversations.  
*Example: Why are you taking so long to reply? Are you doing a yangting?*

*Intern Stella Kim contributed to this report.*