



ADVANCING KOREAN STUDIES IN US EDUCATION

FIFTH KOREAN-AMERICAN STUDIES
CONFERENCE

USC - OCTOBER 17, 2026

DAN E DAVIDSON
SENIOR ADVISOR AND RESEARCH
CENTER DIRECTOR
AMERICAN COUNCILS





I. Focus on language learning careers: taking the long view

Tracking the successful American student of Korean (traditional or heritage)



- 1 Protect continuity for learning Korean from K-12 through college.
- 2 Build distinct on-ramps for traditional and heritage learners at primary, secondary and tertiary levels
- 3 Pair Korean with majors, immersion, and professional internships.

Sources: ACTFL; The Language Flagship; U.S. Department of State CLS.

INTEREST

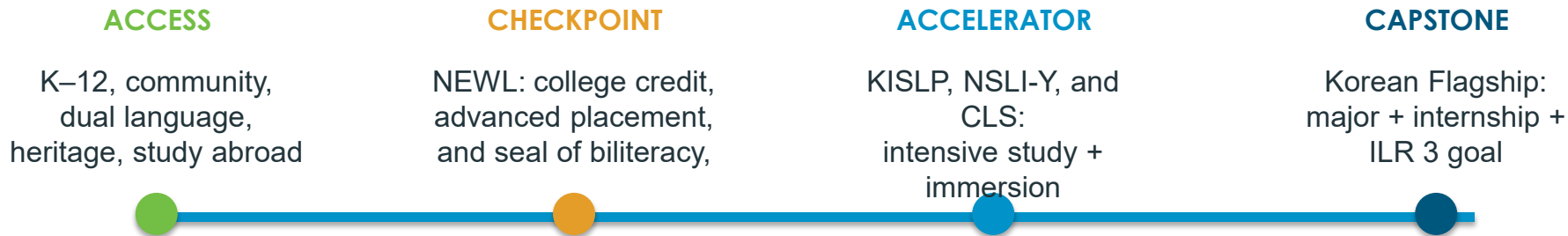


PROFICIENCY



**FIELD EXPERTISE
+ U.S. CAPACITY**
Personal Capacity

Connecting assessment and learner success



Building visible junctures and indicators of success between learning stages so students continue their study of Korean while advancing in their major.

NEWL in cooperation with IKEN creates the school-to-college bridge that supports Korean language growth

THE ACCESS GAP

1 in 5

Americans can access K–12 world language education. Most learners do not continue beyond high school.

The project addresses both entry into language study and the drop-off between school and college.



THE ARTICULATION STRATEGY

Turn access and interest into recognized, college-ready proficiency.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---|
| 01 | EXPAND ACCESS | Increase opportunity to begin and sustain Korean and other less commonly taught languages. |
| 02 | PROTECT CONTINUITY | NEWL provides a reliable school-to-college articulation point for continued study. |
| 03 | RECOGNIZE PROFICIENCY | Convert demonstrated proficiency into credit, advanced placement, and Seal of Biliteracy recognition. |

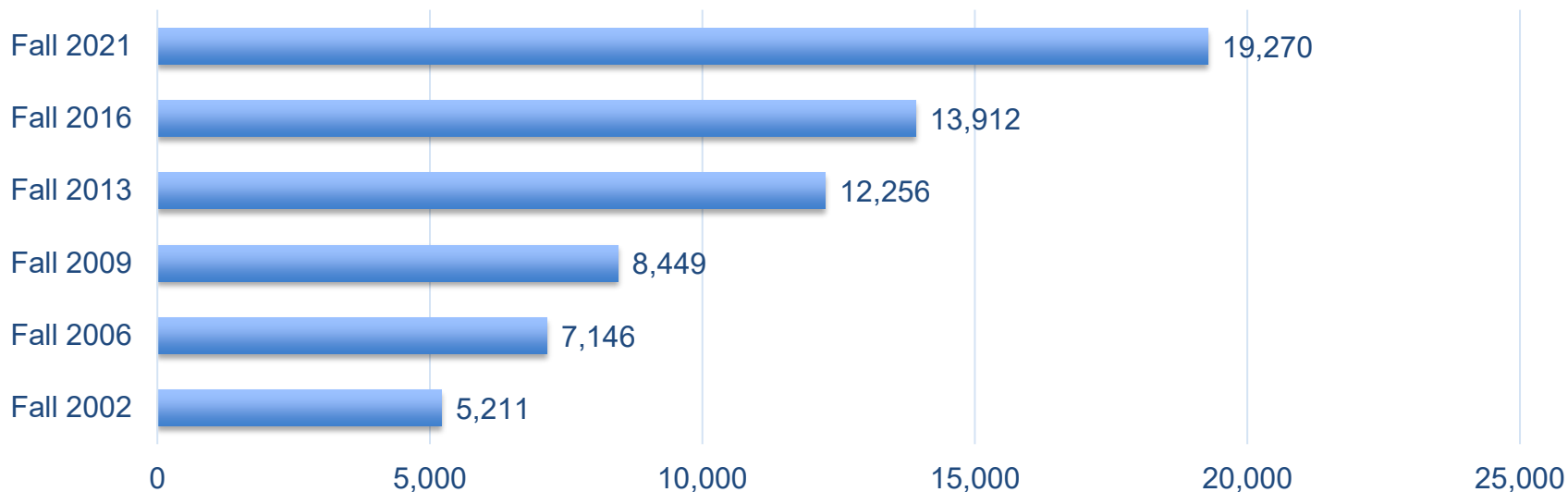
For heritage and non-heritage learners alike, a visible pathway keeps momentum from school into college.



II. Current state of Korean language study in the US

Korean enrollment climbed for two decades—even as other languages declined

Enrollments in Institutions of Higher Education



Year-on-Year Change in Language Enrollment

Base Year Fall 2002 to Fall 2021

	Korean	Chinese	Japanese	All languages
Fall 2002	100%	100%	100%	100%
Fall 2006	137%	150%	125%	113%
Fall 2009	118%	117%	111%	106%
Fall 2013	145%	102%	92%	93%
Fall 2016	114%	87%	103%	91%
Fall 2021	139%	85%	96%	83%
Change from Fall 2002 to Fall 2021	370%	133%	126%	85%

Culture, heritage, and strategic relevance are widening demand for Korean

CULTURAL DEMAND

Hallyu—K-pop, dramas, and film—draws new learners toward Korean language and culture.

HERITAGE CONNECTION

Korean American students strengthen literacy, identity, and academic language.

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

Korean is a U.S.-designated critical language with value in government, business, science, and international affairs.

A GROWING PIPELINE

University enrollment reached 20,000 in 2021, alongside substantial K–12 and community-based participation.

**External factors contribute to the momentum;
NEWL-Korean supplies the articulation that helps sustain it.**

Cultural curiosity may inform future career goals

01 CULTURAL INTEREST

K-pop, film, food, history, and family ties make Korean personally meaningful.

02 CONTINUITY

Credit, placement, and visible milestones keep learners moving across school transitions.

03 CAPABILITY

Extended study and immersion build spontaneous, real-world use across all four skills.

The goal: what students can do with Korean—not just course-taking.



Illustrative image

Traditional and heritage learners start differently—but both need a long runway

TRADITIONAL LEARNERS

Curiosity → foundation → confidence → immersion

They need sustained exposure to move beyond rehearsed language into unfamiliar academic and professional situations.

HERITAGE LEARNERS

Home language → literacy → academic register → professional use

They can convert family and community knowledge into formal literacy, disciplinary vocabulary, and a durable bicultural asset.



Illustrative image

Korean becomes career capital when it is paired with a field

KOREAN + FIELD

GOVERNMENT & SECURITY

analyze, negotiate, brief, and engage

BUSINESS

build partnerships and work across markets and supply chains

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

collaborate, read domain sources, and interpret technical context

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES & MEDIA

interpret institutions, public discourse, and cultural production



Illustrative image

III. DEMONSTRATING SUCCESS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

NEWL is a collaborative initiative between American Councils for International Education and the College Board, with partnerships from language-specific institutions and organizations in four languages:

Arabic| Korean| Portuguese| Russian



NEWL-Korean to be fully integrated into the AP Portfolio within two years

American Councils and College Board have reached an agreement in principle covering Korean and three other critical-language assessments.

A school-to-college pathway is positioned to become easier to find, access, and use nationwide.

WHAT CHANGES — AND WHAT CONTINUES

NOW College Board already endorses NEWL for advanced placement and credit by examination.

2028 / 2029 Anticipated access through College Board registration and score reporting.

NEWL continues to develop and produce the proficiency-based assessments for College Board.

Agreement in principle; timing and implementation details remain subject to finalization.



SKILLS & PROFICIENCY LEVELS

NEWL is a functional, proficiency-based language assessment. It targets **NH to IH** range of language proficiency.

Reading (60min)

Listening (45 min)

Speaking (45 min)

Writing (45 min)

All four components contribute equally to the aggregate score.

Sample items can be accessed here:

 <https://exams.actesting.org/samples/newl/>

Sample Test Item

Korean Text (at IM):

한강공원 방문을 기념할 수 있는 관광 기념품들로 펼쳐지는 경연의 장입니다.

관광객들에게 사랑받는 기념품들이 많이 출품 될 수 있도록 많은 참여를 바랍니다.

- 공모주제: 한강공원의 특성을 대표하며 관광객을 대상으로 판매될 수 있는 기념품
- 기간 및 일정: 12. 24(목): 10:00 - 1. 25(월): 17:00
- 지원자격: 제한없음
- 접수방법: 인터넷 접수: <http://hangang.seoul.go.kr/>

English Item/Question (at IM):

What is one thing readers are invited to do?

K. Submit park souvenirs for a contest.

- D1. Visit the park gift shop for a memento.
- D2. Watch a park concert for the public.
- D3. Buy park maps at the visitor center.

Responses to Sample Item

Item #1: KO_R_13977_10_1 (1 of 1 in AO)

What is one thing readers are invited to do?

 View Stats (1)

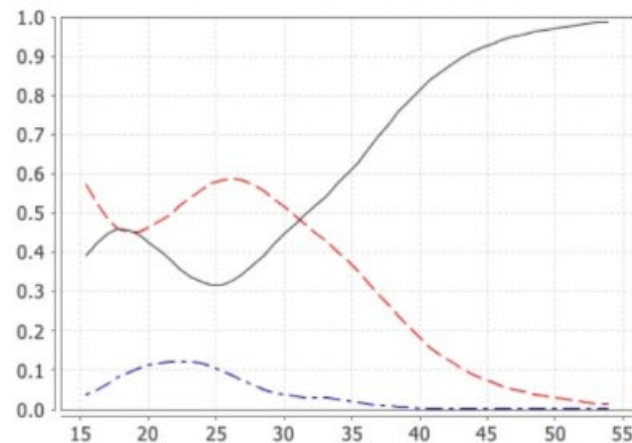
			NEWL 2026 ✖	
0	K	Submit park souvenirs for a contest.	65%	(0.49)
0	D1	Visit the park gift shop for a memento.	33%	(-0.57)
0	D2	Watch a park concert for the public.	3%	(-0.48)
0	D3	Buy park maps at the visitor center.	0%	(0.00)

Keycheck

NEWL 2026

Performance:  Scoring: 

Sample	Response	Infit	Outfit	B
120	100%	1.09	1.03	-0.78





WHY SCHOOLS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS CHOOSE NEWL?

- ◆ College Board Endorsed
- ◆ Earn college credit or advanced placement
- ◆ Provides a testing option when AP is not available
- ◆ Helps students meet Seal of Biliteracy requirements
- ◆ Provides professional, nationally recognized scoring



NEWL PREPARATION & READINESS

Non-Proctored Practice Exams

Students can prepare for the NEWL exam using official non-proctored online practice exams.

These practice exam closely reflect the main exam format and are highly recommended for building familiarity and confidence. A percentage-correct score will be provided.

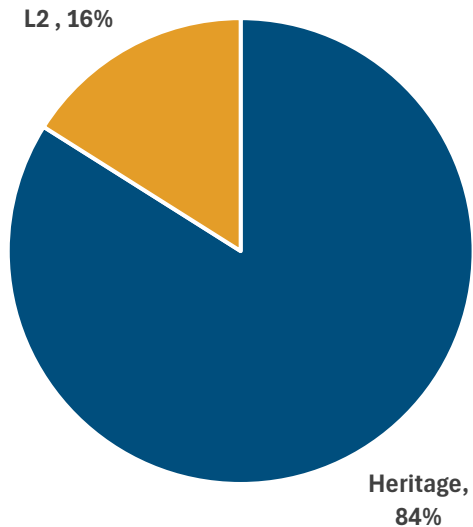
NEWL practice exams are available all year round.



<https://www.americancouncils.org/preparing-newl>

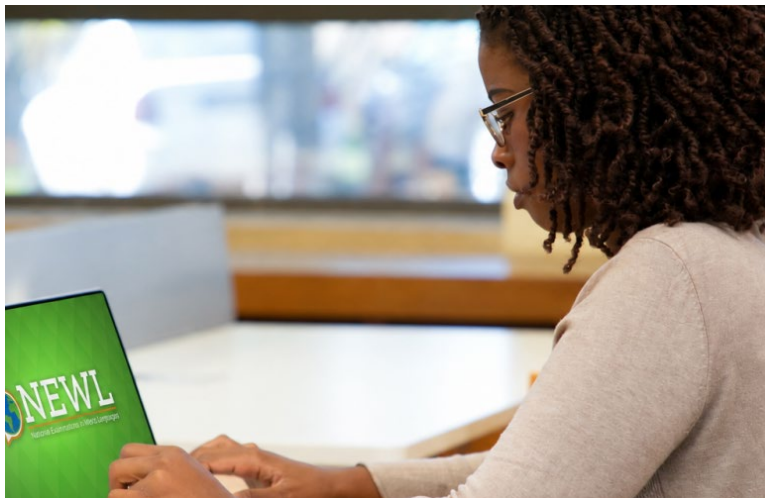
NEWL Examinee Profile

Traditional/Heritage

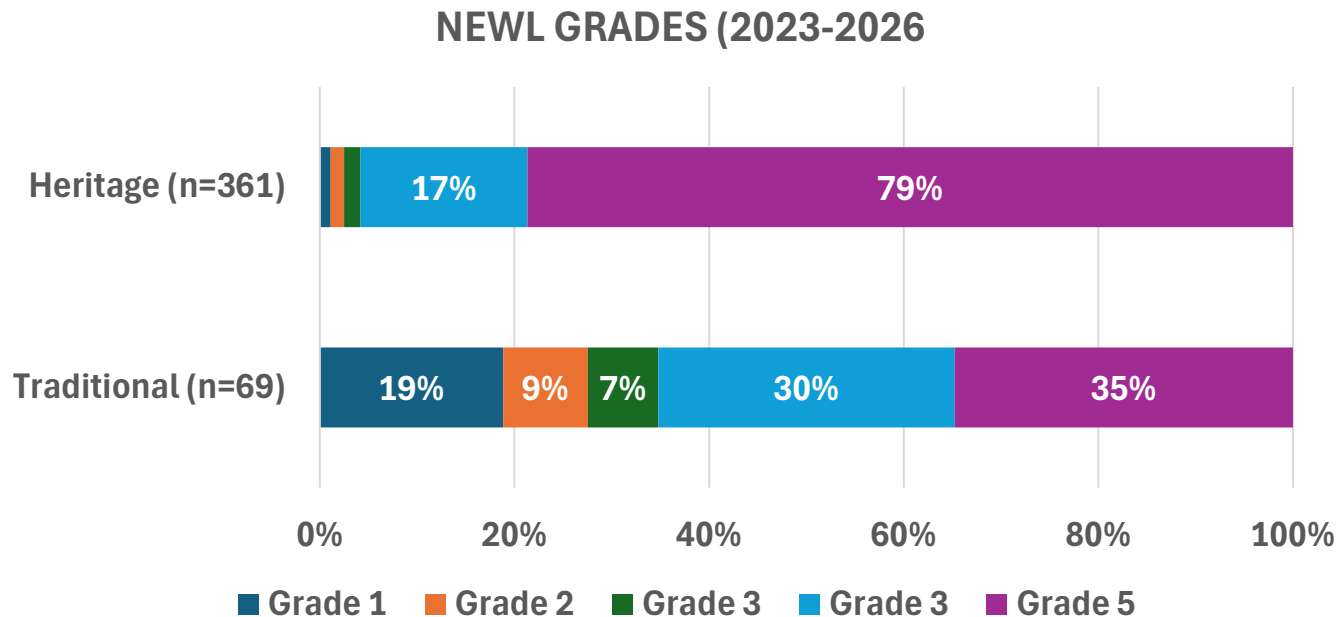


Examinees from age 14 or higher

*High schools, Community schools, Home schools,
Heritage, Residence Abroad, Missionary Work*



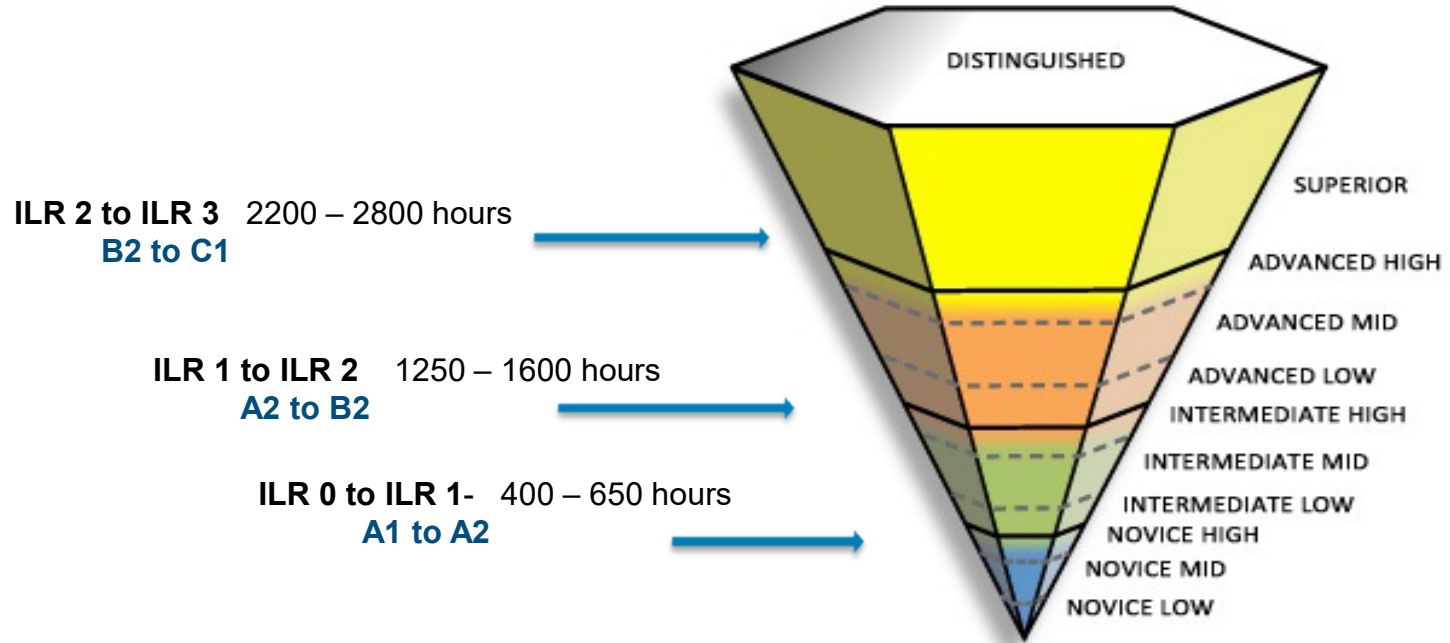
NEWL Examinee Profile



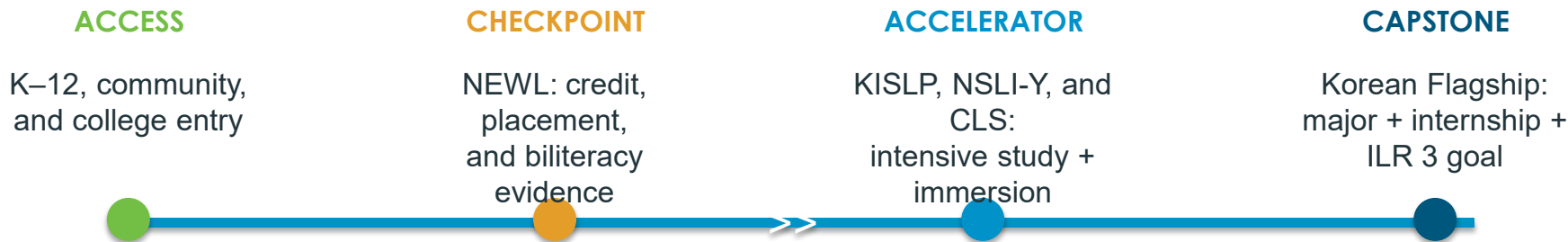
NEWL Provides AP-grades as well as standardized proficiency ratings

NEWL Korean Proficiency Scores 2023-26				
	Speaking	Reading	Listening	Writing
NM	1%	3%		2%
NH	3%	10%	9%	6%
IL	8%	9%	8%	16%
IM	17%	12%	14%	19%
IH	71%	66%	69%	57%

Typical training time required for proficiency gains from ILR Levels 0 - 1, 1 - 2, 2 - 3 CEFR A1-A2, A2- B2, B2 – C1 (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean)



Moving on to the next level through study in college and structured overseas immersion



The outcomes that follow are not isolated results. They show how well-designed programs move learners up the proficiency scale at successive stages.

Design principle: build visible transitions between stages so students can keep Korean while advancing in their major.

1. National Security Language Initiative for Youth

**Merit-based scholarship program for intensive language study
Immersion in the host culture through home stays, activities,
and excursions.**

**Program Duration: 6-7 weeks summer language immersion
program**

**Eligibility: U.S. citizen, high school student 2026-2027, 15-18
years old, and more.**

Program Cost: Covered by NSLI-Y Scholarship

**Application Deadline: November 12, 2026 at 4:00 PM ET for
Summer 2027**

<https://www.nsliforyouth.org/how-to-apply/apply/>



National Security Language Initiative for Youth Outcomes

Outcomes on summer programs:

- Complete beginners usually reach Novice Mid to Intermediate Low upon completion of a 6-week program
- **Students entering at Novice Low – Novice High usually reach Intermediate Low – Intermediate Mid**
- Most students advance 1 sublevel in the summer program



2. Korean Intensive Summer Language Program

Eight-week program at Chungbuk National University (CBNU) in Cheongju

Open to all U.S. undergraduate and graduate students who have completed two academic semesters of Korean language study or the equivalent

40 hours of lectures, seminars, and hands-on cultural activities

Housing in university dormitories on the CBNU campus
24/7 onsite support from a U.S. Resident Director

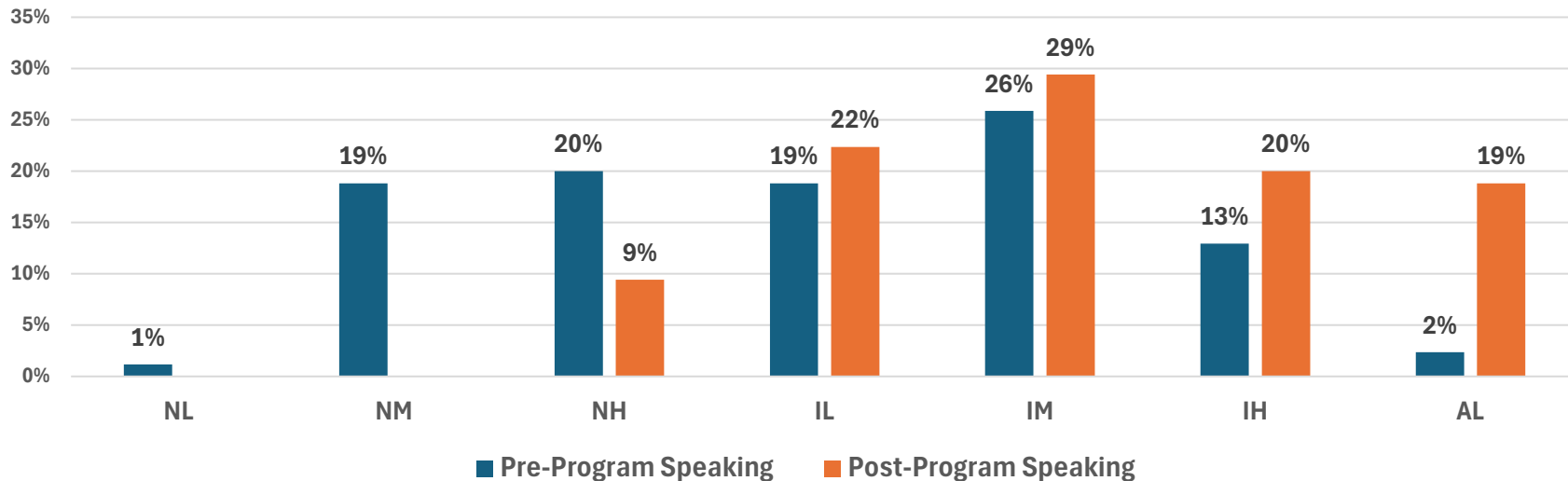
Engaging and varied cultural activities, and interesting opportunities for participants to connect with local South Korean families and peers

<https://www.studyabroad.americancouncils.org/kislp>



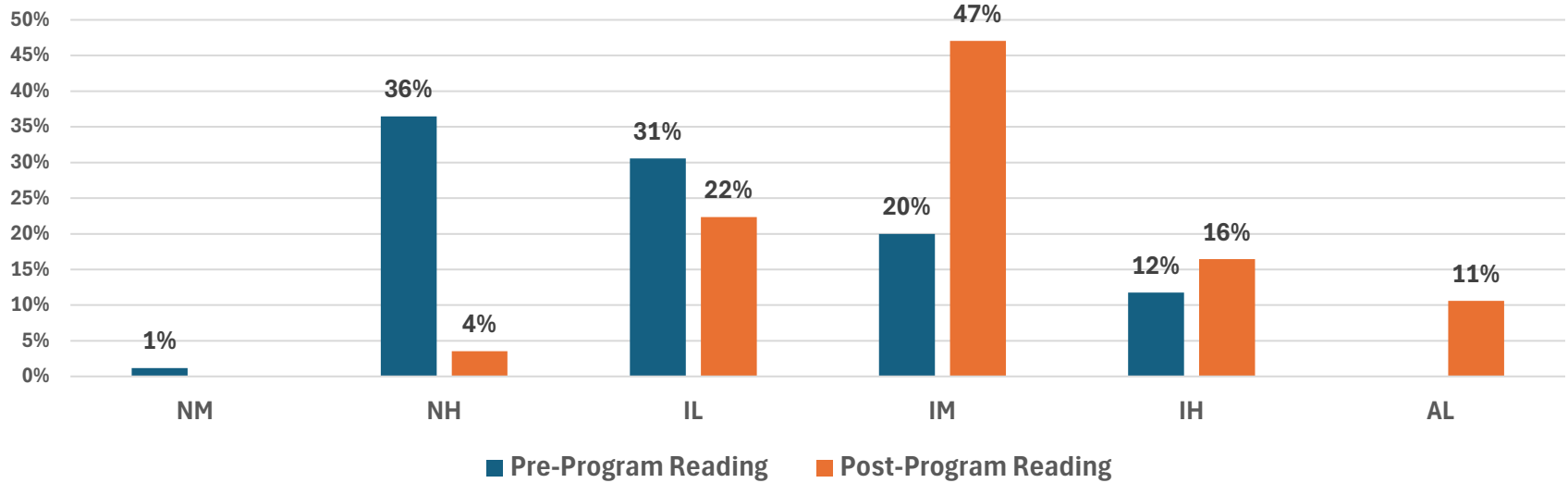
Strengthening proficiency in a culturally rich immersion environment

Korean Intensive Summer Program
Pre-Post Speaking Scores 2023-26



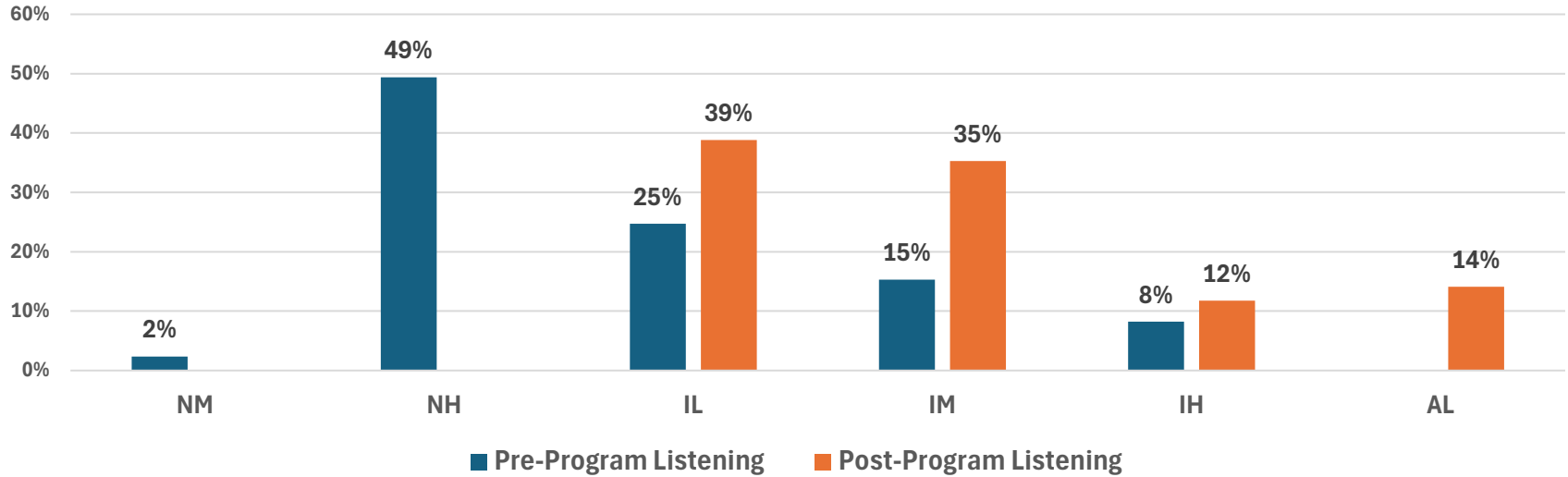
N=85

Korean Intensive Summer Program Pre-Post Reading Scores 2023-26



N=85

Korean Intensive Summer Program Pre-Post Listening Scores 2023-26



N=85

Korean Intensive Summer Language Program

Key Dates:

Summer 2027 : June 22 - August 13, 2027

Applications Deadline: February 15, 2027

Link for application:

<https://americancouncils-horizons.symplicity.com/>



<https://www.studyabroad.americancouncils.org/kislp>



A Program of the U.S. Department of State

3, Critical Language Scholarship Program

- Intensive summer language instruction to high-achieving undergraduate and graduate students, selected through a competitive, merit-based process
- Participants receive the equivalent of one year of college-level language study in eight weeks through intensive language instruction and cultural activities
- Formal classroom language instruction is provided for a minimum of 18 hours per week
- Extracurricular activities include regular one-on-one sessions with instructors, conversation practice with local language partners, hands-on cultural activities & excursions to historic sites

<https://clscholarship.org/>



Critical Language Scholarship Program

45 students attending classes in person (with a one-year prerequisite of college-level Korean or the equivalent):

Chonnam National University in Gwangju

Pusan National University in Busan.

25 students taking virtual Korean classes at the beginning level

Apply Now: <https://ais.americancouncils.org/cls>

Deadline: Tuesday, November 17, 2026 at 8:00 PM EST

Questions? Please contact: cls@americancouncils.org



Critical Language Scholarship Program Outcomes

Average gain of 1.6 sublevels

Nearly 89% of participants who began at the Novice threshold finished at Intermediate or Advanced

42.6% of participants who began at the Intermediate threshold reached Advanced proficiency by the end of the summer

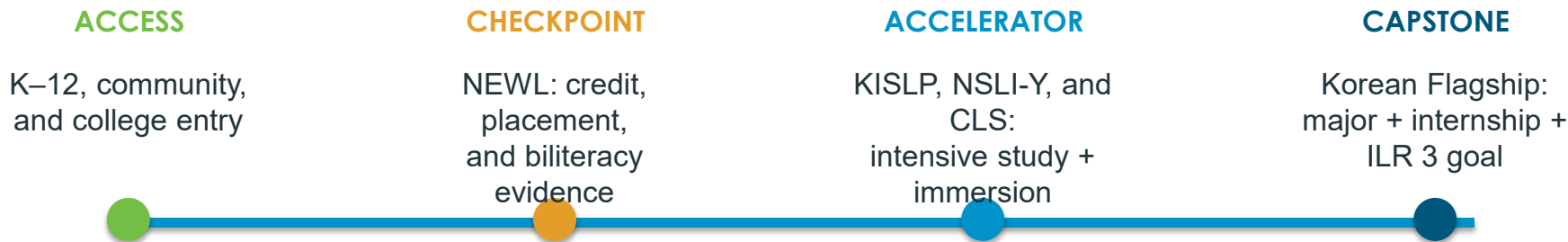
97 participants who began at the Novice threshold gained an average of 2.8 sublevels. By the end of the program, 77 were rated Intermediate and nine were rated Advanced

155 participants who began at the Intermediate threshold gained an average of 1.4 sublevels. By the end of the program, 66 participants had reached the Advanced threshold

65 participants who began at the Advanced threshold gained an average of 0.4 sublevels, with two reaching Superior level



Moving from advanced to the professional level of linguistic and cultural proficiency



The outcomes that follow are not isolated results. They show how well-designed programs move learners up the proficiency scale at successive stages.

Design principle: build visible transitions between stages so students can keep Korean while advancing in their major.

4. Overseas Korean Flagship Program

Host Institution: Korea University (KU) in Seoul, in partnership with the [University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Korean Language Flagship Center \(KLFC\)](#)

Program Goals

1. **Professional proficiency** in Korean equivalent to Superior (on the ACTFL scale) or Level 3 (on the ILR scale)
2. **Comprehensive and deeper understanding of Korean culture and society**
3. **Capability** to take an active role in their field as a Korea specialist

<https://koreanflagship.manoa.hawaii.edu/programs/korean-flagship-overseas-program/>



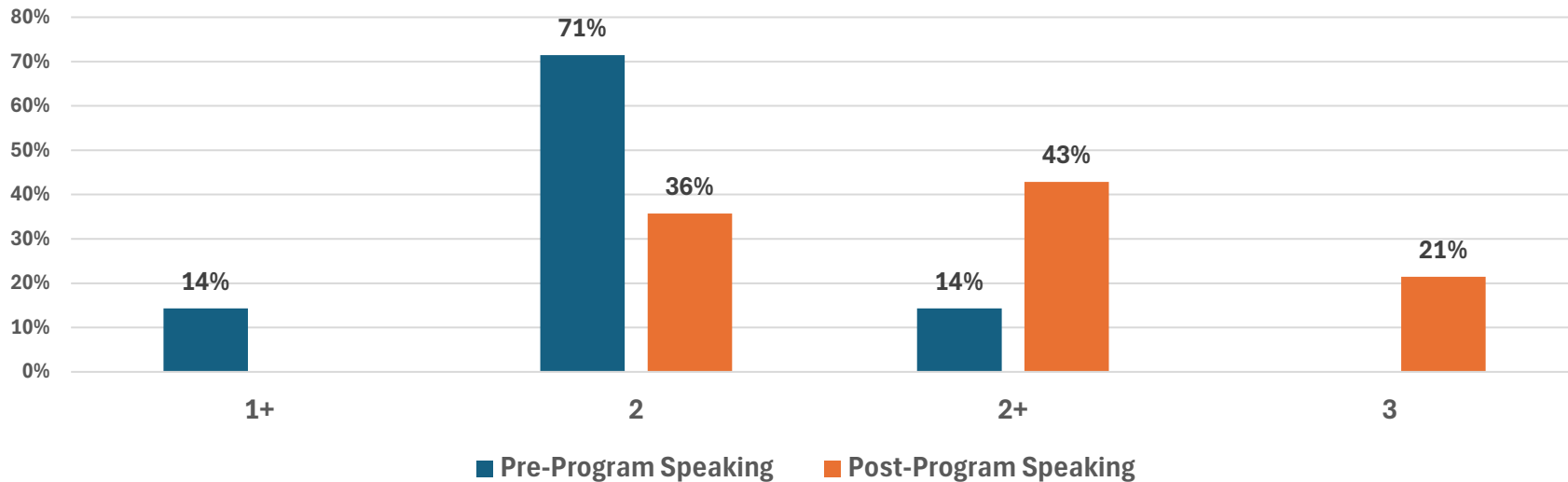
THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals



The Korean Overseas Flagship – Academic Year Program at KU (Seoul)

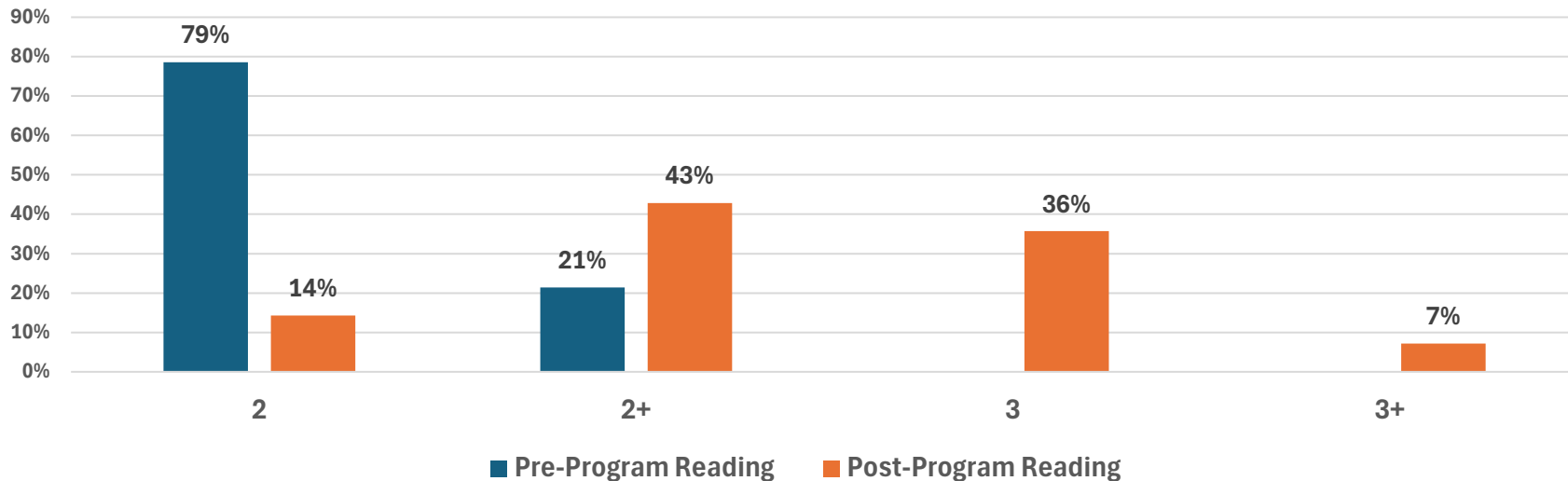
Korean Overseas Academic Year Program
Pre-Post Speaking Scores 2024-26



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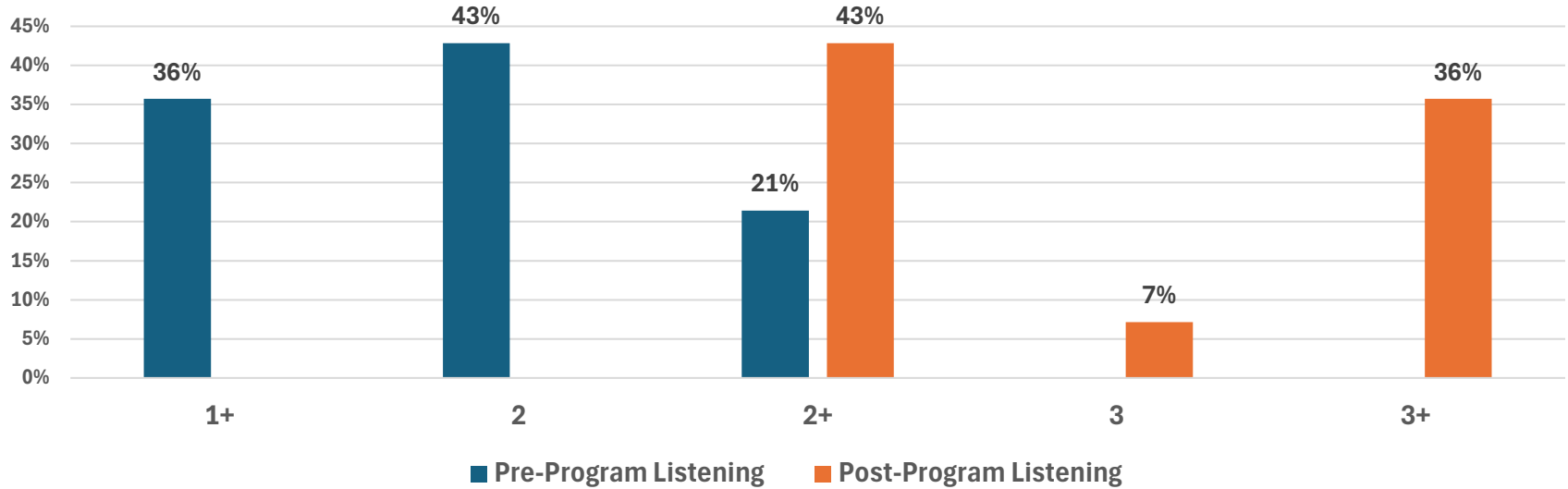
The Korean Overseas Flagship – Academic Year Program at KU (Seoul)

Korean Overseas Academic Year Program
Pre-Post Reading Scores 2024-26



N=14

Korean Overseas Academic Year Program Pre-Post Listening Scores 2023-26



N=14



IV. From college to the work force. How Korean differentiates and adds value for job applicants.

Use Korean to extend your professional reach An alternative, not a prerequisite: pair Korean with disciplinary expertise, credentials and experience.

Policy & diplomacy:

Korea-focused research: combine Korean sources, analysis and English writing.

Business & commerce:

Financial planning, supply chain and product strategy: use Korean alongside analytical skills.

STEM & technology:

Engineering and IT: connect technical teams in the U.S. and Korea.

Law & cross-border practice:

Corporate and venture law: Korean complements legal training and bar admission.

Social & clinical

services: Bilingual clinical practice Korean complements professional training and independent licensure.

Community

development: Community-project support and localization. Some translator roles require native Korean.

Make professional Korean the core of your career

A narrower, legitimate launch route for students who invest in professional proficiency before entering a field.

NSA language analysis:
Interpret Korean-language
context, cultural nuance
and dialect; turn source
material into clear
intelligence reporting.

CIA language officer:
Korean is explicitly listed.
Language officers support
operations through
translation, interpretation
and cultural expertise.

Contractor Korean
Linguist: Translate,
transcribe, interpret and
analyze Korean sources
for government missions.

ENTRY STRATEGY: apply directly to language-centered recruitment

ILR 3/3/3 is a strong starting credential—not automatic qualification. Check language tests, citizenship, clearance and experience; CIA describes native/near-native fluency.



Thank you!
Welcome your questions and comments.