The Sound Value of the Letter "ㅓ"

in

Hunmin Jeongeum

Sheon Gi Gim

1. Hunmin Jeongeum was completed in the year of Our Lord, 1443 by the king Shejong the Great and was promulgated in 1446 for the use of the whole nation, after the three years' serious tests of its practicality. Using 28 letters thus created the emminent scholars specially selected were ordered to compose one hundred twenty five sublime poems of 'Ryongbi Eocheon Ga' which may be rendered, "The Songs of the Flying Dragons Ruling the Heaven." The number "Twenty Eight" carried a special significance to the Ancient Pundits who observed that there were 28 constellations revolving round the Polestar and 28 days in a month of the Lunar Calender. The Sagacious scholars might have thought it wise to have 28 Letters to govern the Spiritual World, not to mention that there is a record in Shu Ging that in the days of the Emperor Yao there had existed 28 Letters. In Hunmin Jeongeum which, in English, may be rendered as "The National Orthophony for the Korean People." The 28 letters were as below.

The Consonant letters: ㄱㅋㆁ, ㄷㅌㄴ, ㅂㅍㅇ, ㅈㅊㅅ, ㅇㆆㅎ, ㄹㅿ

The Vowel Letters: ·ㅡㅣ, ㅗㅏㅜㅓ, ㅛㅑ, ㅠㅕ

Out of 28 letters three consonant letters, namely, ㆆ, ㅿ, ㆁ, and one

vowel letter, that is, /ㆍ/ came into disuse.

2. The letter /ㆆ/ which stand for the sound /ʔ/, the letter /ㅿ/ standing for thea lvealor fricative sound /r/ and the letter /ㆁ/, representing the sound [ŋ] are no longer used for one reason or other. Among vowel letters only one letter has ceased to be used in the present orthography. As to the lost sound values of these obsolete letters, a number of scholars, home and abroad, have made attemps to clarify the original sound values they stood for. However, there seems to be none who has given a serious thought as to the sound value of the letter /ㅐ/, the current sound value of which is [ə]. Did the letter represent the sound value /ə/ at the time of its first promulgation in 1446? Gradually a doubt as to the real original value of this letter rose in my mind as the years went by. First of all, if we assume the vowel letters /ㅣ/, /ㅏ/, /ㅗ/, /ㅜ/, /ㅡ/, /(ㆍ)/, /ㅐ/, stood for the sound values /i/, /a/, /o/, /u/, /ɯ/, /ɐ/, /ə/ respectively, as the vowel chart shows, the structure of the Korean language looks so oddly unbalanced, lacking the most common front unrounded mid vowel [e]. In the second place, words containing the sound /ㅐ/ at the present time did not have that same value at the time of promulgation of Hunmin Jeongeum. The words /məri/(head)/was/ [mari] as found in the first edition of Korean Version of Tufu's Poems. The word [nəg] (four) is also found in a petrified form [na] in the compound word [nahɯr] (four days) and the word [shəg] (three) was once [sha] as is found in the word [shahɯr] (three days). Besides in the course of studying poems of Silla Period the word [me:n] (blind) was [ma:n] instead of the present form, so that I gradually came to the conclusion that in the phonological structure of the Ancient Korean the

vowel [ə]did not exist. In the third place some common Altaic words such as /eren/ (master, or Lord, or king) are found to contain the vowel /e/, which points to the fact that there is ample possibility that even the Korean words must have had the same vowel /e/. In the fourth place In the Mongolian and Manchu text books such as Mongeo Rogoldai and Cheongeo Rogoldai the Korean letter /ㅓ/ is used as a kind of phonetic symbol to show the vowel sound [e] in both languages. In the fifth place The pronunciation of the key character /業/ is [je] in Modern Mandarin. The facts mentioned above gave me a firm conviction that the sound value of the letter /ㅓ/ must be restudied. This assumption entails a reconstruction of the Korean vowel structure at the middle of the fifteenth century. In this short article the author has made an attempt to prove that the original sound value of the letter /ㅓ/ was [e], but whether he has succeeded or not remains to be seen.

3. The present sound value of the letter /ㅓ/ is [ə] and its position in the vowel diagram may be shown as below.

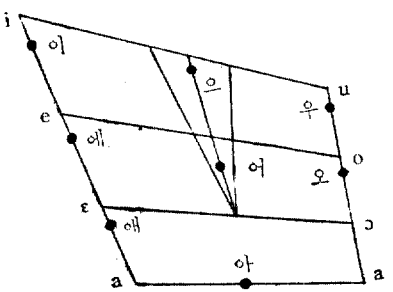


Fig.1 The Present monophthongs of Korean

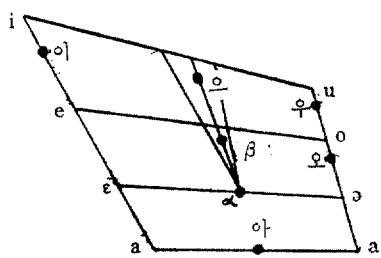


Fig.2

(1). The timber difference between the long and short /i/ is almost negligible, there being no notieable diverting as compared with the difference between the long and short /i/ of English. However, the timber difference

between the long and short /ㅏ/ is quite apparent, shorter one approaching to the unrounded Cardinal vowel No. 6/ʌ/, The timber differences between the remaining vowels are also negligible as in the case of high front vowel /i/.

4. The present monophthong system came into existance after the vowel contractions had taken place, that is to say, /ㅏ/ +/ㅣ/=/ㅐ/, /ㅓ/+/ㅣ/=/ㅔ/and/ㅗ/+/ㅣ/=/ㅚ/, etc. If we show the vowel system of the fifteenth century except /·/ and /ㅓ/ the diagram is shown in Fig.2. The sound value of the letter [·] has been much conversal. The traditional view as to its value sound was that it must have been some intermediate sound between /a/ and /o/. The one of the scholars who tried to clarify the sound value, the letter stood for, was late Prof. Ogura and his judgment was that the phonetic value was a similar vowel to the vowel /ɐ/. It was the first scientific attempt to give light to the problem. After him his student Prof. Kono Rokuro put forth a diffent view concerning its sound value and his advocation was that the vowel could not have the x lip-rounding and consequently it could not but be the vowel /ʌ/. Third theory was proposed by late Dr. Choe Hyeon Bae whose view was that the letter stood for the sound [ə]. Fourth theory was Ju Shi Gyeong's. He advocated that it represented the sound /i/+/ɯ/=/jɯ/. This tumultous and clamorous fights have been quenched and now all have come to the compromising point that it represented a kind of the vowel [ɐ]. Again this symbol gives rise to some problems. since phoneticians use this symbol for different values. For instance, Henry Sweet uses this for so-called 'dull back' vowel, which is equivalent to /ʌ/. Therefore, according to the sound value given by Sweet the articulating point would be that of /ɑ/.

But Prof. Daniel Jones defines this symbol as such that represents a sound intermediate in timber between /$ə_1$/ and /$ə_3$/. In that case the symbol occupies the position /β/. In either of the cases the place of the vowel /ㅓ/ to be put in the series of the neutral vowels appears to be so odd and unnatural, leaving wide vacant space baren between /i/ and /a/. Besides according to Trubetzkoy's 'Principles of Phonology most of the languages comprises the mid front vowel /e/, not to mention that languages in the relation of affinity with Korean such as Mongolian and Manchu and Japanese have it.

5. In the Book of the National Orthophony and its Exegesis by Jeong Rin Ji the key character for the sound value of the letter given is /業/, as below.

a) ㅓ 如業字中聲[L_3^b]
b) ㅓ 與ㅡ同而張 其形則·與ㅣ合而成, 亦取 天地之用發於事物而 待人而成也 [$L9^{a-b}$]
c) ㅓ 次之 地四 生金之位也[$L10^b$]
d) ㆁ 與ㅇㅓ而爲ㅇㅓ之類[$L19^a$]
e) ㅜ 與ㅓ同出於ㅡ 故合而爲ㅜㅓ[$L20^{a-b}$]
f) ㅂ如ㅇㅓ爲業[$L22^b$]
g) 業字ㆁ在ㅓ左之類[$L24^b$]

a) /業/, is pronounced as the vowel of the word /ㅇㅓㅂ/. What is the pronuciation of the character /業/? Of course the present pronunciation of it is /əb/. Was it pronounced as present? This letter /ㅓ/ was used as the phonetic symbol in the phonetic transcription of the Mandarin text called 'Rogeordae Eonhae' (老乞大諺解) and the Mandarin sound, which the letter stands for, is [e]. as shown in the following examples.

(1) /天/ 턴/턴(老3) (KAD, #996) M./t'ien/ C./t'ɪn/ A/t'ien/.

(2) /見/ 견ㄱ젼(老3) (KAD, #368) M./kien/, C./kɪn/, A./kien/ /hien/, /hin/, /γien/

(3) /現/ 현ㄱ현(老54) (KAD.#368) M./kien/ C./hɪn/ A./kien/ /hien/ /ɪn/ /γien/

(4) /前/ 젼ㄱ쳔(老5) (KAD.#1077) M./ts'ien/ /ts'ɪn/ /dz'ien/

(5) /免/ 면ㄱ면(老5) (KAD.#625) /mien/ /mɪn/ /mjän/

(6) /便/ 뼌ㄱ변(老2) (KAD.#732) /pien'/ /pɪn'/ /ˌb'jän/

(7) /年/ 년ㄱ년(老11) (KAD.#669) /nien/ /nɪn/ /nien/

(8) /節/ 졍ㄱ져(老10) (KAD.#1048) /ˌtsɪe/ /tsɪt/ /tsiet/

(9) /面/ 면ㄱ면(老13) (KAD.#626) /mien/ /min/ /mjän'/

(10) /言/ 연ㄱ연(老9) (KAD.#234) /ɪen/ /ɪn/ /ngjän/

(11) /千/ 쳔ㄱ쳔(老78) (KAD.#1076) /ts'ien/ /ts'ɪn/ /ˌts'ien/

※ KAD: stands for Karlgren Analytic Dictionary.

The vowel sounds of the examples given above except those of 6, 7, 10, 11, that is, [ie] remained unchanged from the Ancient Period down through the Modern Mandarin. Therefore we can safely say that the phonetic symbol 「ㅖ」 stands for nothing but the vowel sound [je]. The Chinese sound of the vowel part is not a monophthong, but diphthongs as Korean letter /ㅖ/ so that, if we can single out the second element of the diphthong, that is [e], the Korean letter 「ㅔ」 represents the vowel sound [e].

6. Even though we can prove that the Korean and Chinese /e/ belong to the same category, is it possible for us to say that both of them were exactly alike? According to Sha Sheong Thonggo (四聲通攷) compiled by Shin Shug Ju. it is clear that they were not the same. It is also good to bear in mind the fact that the phonetic notation of Rogeordae was the same as that of Sha Sheong Thonggo(A Rhyming Dictionary of Four Tones). All those books were founded upon Hongmu Jeong Un (洪武正韻) and we can infer that the pronuciation of them also was based on that

of Hongmu Jeong Un. Now let us examine what Shin Shug Ju mentions. The seventh explanary note of the introductory remarks goes as follows.

> Generally speaking the sounds of our country are light and shallow, whereas the sounds of Chinese are heavy and deep. The National Orthophony is based upon the sounds of our country. However, if we want to use the letters of the National Orthophony for the Chinese sounds it is with slight changes that we can use them without difficuties. For example, the vowel letters such as /ㅏ, ㅑ, ㅓ, ㅕ/ stand for the sounds with the mouth (lips) spread. In other words the mouth remains the same, pronoucing the initial sounds (consonants). The letters /ㅗ, ㅛ, ㅜ, ㅠ/ represent the sounds with mouth rounding. The tongue remains unchanged. Hence, when the vowel letter /ㅏ/ is used used for the Chinese character is as to be read as some intermediate sound between /ㅏ/ and /·/, /ㅑ/ an intermedaite sound between /ㅑ/ and /·/, /ㅓ/ an intermediate sound between /ㅓ/ and /—/, /ㅕ/ an intermediate sound between /ㅕ/ and /—/, /ㅗ/ an intermedaite sound between /ㅗ/ and /·/, /ㅛ/ an intermediate sound between /ㅛ/ and /·/, /ㅠ/ an intermedaite sound between /ㅜ/ and /—/, /ㅠ/ an intermediate sound between /ㅣ/ and /—/, /·/ an intermedaite sound between /·/ and /—/, /—/ an intermediate sound between /—/ and /—/, and /·/, an intermediate sound between /ㅣ/ and /—/. Then they are almost the same as the Chinese sounds. As for the changed vowel an explanation will be given for each under its heading (section) concerned.

> 大抵本國之音輕而淺 中國之音重而深 合訓民正音出於本國之音 若用於漢音 則必變而通之 乃得無礙 如中聲ㅏㅑㅓㅕ張口之字 則初聲所發之口不變 ㅗㅛㅜㅠ縮口之字 則初聲所發之舌不變 故中聲爲ㅏ之字 則讀如ㅏ·之間 爲ㅑ之字則讀如ㅑ·之間 ㅓ則ㅓ一之間 ㅕ則ㅕ一之間 ㅗ則ㅗ之間ㅛ則ㅛ之間 ㅜ則ㅜ一之間 ㅠ一間ㅗ則ㅗ之間 ㅛ則ㅛ之間 ㅜ則ㅜ一之間 ㅠ則ㅠ一之間 則一之間 一則一之間 ㅣ則ㅣ一之間
>
> 然後庶合中音之音矣 合中聲變者 逐韻同中聲音字之下論繹之

Here we are concerned with the sound value of the letter /ㅕ/, Let us examine particularly this portion underlined. In a word an interme-

diate vowel sound betwaeen /e/ (ㅔ) and /ɯ/ (ㅡ) is nothing but a slightly centralized /e/ towards /ɯ/. On the whole Chinese sounds (vowels) tend either cetralized or retracted, so that it gives the impresion of heaviness and dullness as compared with Korean ones. We may also put it in a different way. The Korean vowel /ㅔ/ is advanced towards the cardinal vowel limit, whereas the Chinese sound is slightly centralized. However, it is chrystal clear that the Chinese /e/ is substitutable with the Korean /e/ (ㅔ), In a knutshell the letter /ㅔ/ stands for the Chinese vowel /e/, which means that the Korean letter /ㅔ/ is used here as the sound symbol of the vowel sound /e/. Now we can safely conclude that the sound value of the letter /ㅔ/ must be the vowel [e].

7. The sound /ㅔ/ of the Sino-Korean word does not necessarily always correspond with the sound /e/ in Mandarin, but often with the sound /i/ in Mandarin words that may be eventually traced back to the Ancient /je/ as shown in the following examples.

(1) Chinese Character	Korean	Mandarin	Cantonese	Ancient	KAD No.
壁(wall)	/bjək/	/pi/	/pik/	/piek/	723
戚(kin)	/chjək/	/ts'i/	/ts'ik/	/tsʻiek/	1059
敵(enemy)	/dzjək/	/ti/	/tik/	/d'iek/	987
擊(strike)	/gjəg/	/ki/	/kik/	/kiek/	330
曆(calender)	/rjəg/	/li/	/lik/	/liek/	536

8. The Korean sound /ㅔ/ also correpond with the open /ɛ/ of the Ancient form /ɛ/ as shown in the following examples.

Chinese Characters	Korean	Mandarin	Cantonese	Ancient	KAD No.
赤(red)	/dzjəg/	/trī/	/tsh'ik/	/tshjɛk/	1232
尺(foot)	/chjəg/	/trμ/	/tshik/	/tshjɛㅓ/	1200
擲(throw)	/chjəg/	/trμ/	/tsha:k/	/d'jɛk/	1200

城(castle)	/sr'əng/	/trĭng/	/sring/	/zjɛng/	1204
正(right)	/dzjəng/	/trĭng/	/tshing/	/zjɛng/	1198

9. Besides the examples given above the Korean /ㅓ/ also correspond with the sounds of Ancient forms, namely, /ə/, /ʌ/ and /o/, but their nembers are very limited. as follows.

Chinese Characters	Korean	Mandarin	Catonese	Ancient	KAD No.
憶(memory)	/əg/	/i/	/jik/	/jək/	203
乞(beg)	/gər/	/ki/	/h t/	/kjət/	332
力(power)	/rjəg/	/li/	/lik/	/lijək/	523
兵(soldier)	/bjəng/	/ping/	/ping/	/pjwʌng/	385
京(capital)	/gjəng/	/king/	/king/	/kjʌng/	392
處(place)	/chjə/	/trhu/	/tshy/	/tshyo/	1256
魚(fish)	/ngə/	/y/	/y/	/ngyo/	1332

10. In the pronunciation of Jeju Irland (Quelpart Irland) the old form of the Sino-Korean words /e/ has been preserved as seen in the following examples.

	壁	病	平	結婚
1) Chinese	/pjek/	/bhjeng/	/bhwjəng/	/kierhon/
2) Seoul	/bjəg/	/bjəng/	/biəng bhwjəng/	/gjərhon/
3) Jeju	/bjek/	/bjeng/	/pengseng/	/gelhon/

11. Another evidence that may prove the letter stood for the sound /e/ is found in Mongeo Rogeordae (蒙語老乞大), which was used as a text book for Korean students of that Mongolian Department in Shayeog Weom. (司譯院)

Mongolian words	Hangeur transliteration	Korean translation	Source
/irebe/(came)	이러버	/onda/	NR.1.1a
/edur buri/(every day)	어둘부리	/nar mada/	MR.1.3.a

/ken ese/from whom)	켄너서	/nui gei/	MR.1.3.a
/tere uge gi/(that word, acc.)	더러우거기	/geu mar eur/	MR.1.2.b
/medeku ugei bjseu/ (would not know)	머더쿠우게비셔	/mororiroda/	MR.1.2.a-b
/nigen/(one) bu(day)	니건	/hara t nar/	MR.1.1.b
/keje/(when)	커져	/eonje/	MR.1.1.a
/ece/(from)	어쳐	/esheo/	MR.1.1.a
/ene sara/(this month)	어너사라	/i dar/	MR.1.1.a

12. Rogeordae must have been compiled rather earlier than most of the scholars conjecture. Prof. Ogura Shinpei already indicated that the name is found in Gyeonggug Daejeon (經國大典)(The Great Code) which was completed in 1469 A.D. once, so it is fairly safe to conclude that Rogeordae had came into existiance before that year. Of course it has been revised by several hands overseveral centries. However this precious book gives some hints that the letter /ㅓ/ represented the sound /e/ until the last revised edition of it in 1790 by Ri Eog Sheong(李億成) and the question until when it retained the sound value /e/ is indirectly answered.

13. In the phonetic transcription by means of Hangeur of 'Cheongeo Rogeordae the letter /ㅓ/ consistantly stands for the Manchu vowel [e] as shown in the following examples. This fact also confirms the theory that the letter /ㅓ/ in Hunmin Jeongeum represented the sound /e/.

Manchu text /te absi genembi/ (Cheong Ro. 1.1.a)
Hangeur Korean Trans: 터 압시 거넴비
cription
English Version: Now where do you go?

(2) M.T.: /bi ere bja icje de dzuraka/(Cheong Ro. 1.1.a-b)
K.Tr.:/ 비어러뱌 이쳐 더 주라카
E.V.: I set out at the beginning of this month.

(3) M.T.: /si inenggidari aibe kicjembi/(Cheong. Ro. 1.3.a)

K.Tr. 시 이넝기다리 애버키철비

E.V.: Everyday, What do you study?

(4) M.T.: /sɯpui dzuleri sibja tatapi bidhe shedzimbi /(1. 4. a)

H. Tr: 스퓌 주러리 시뱌 타타피 빈허 셔짐비

E.V.: Infront of the master we draw lots and recite.

(5) M.T.: /guebure bidhe burengge adarame?/

H.Tr.: 궈부러 빈허 부렁거 아다라머

E.V.: How do you give the exemption certificate?

14. A further evidnce that the Korean letter /ㅓ/ had the sound value of the vowel /e/ is furnished in 'Shinhae Cheobeo', a textbook of Japanese for the Korean students who were desirous of taking the qualification examinaɹion as interpreter as well as translator. The text I consulted is the edition of 1782. which was reprinted in Kyoto. According to this text the Japanese simple vowel /e/ is transcribed the Hangeur letter /ㅔ/. the sound value of which is originally /jej/, but later accoding to the phenomenon of vowel contraction became pronounced /je/. The form /jej/ in the orthography indicated the fact that the book was written after the completion of the vowel contraction. And yet nontheless it gives a proof that the letter had the sound value some what like /e/.

15. From the Japanee source we can draw another evidesnce that the letter had the value /e/. The Sino-Japanese words which contains the vowel /e/ correspont with the Sino-Korean words comprising the sound value /ə/. as shown in the following examples.

Chinese Characters	言	先	健	面	年	便
Korean	/ən/(언)	/shən/(션)	/gən/(건)	/mjən/(면)	/njən/(년)	/phjən/(편)
Japanese	/gen/	/seng/	/geng/	/mjen/	/nen/	/ben/

From the examples we may also judge that the phenomenon of dejotization took place some time in the past. and they are much suggestive of the fact that there was a possibility that the present sound /ə/ was once pronounced as /e/.

16. As to the sound value of the letter /ㅓ/ we have a sort of synchronic evidence and comparative side proof, but also a kind of diachronic evidnce In the course of compatative study of the altaic languages we find some common words, the Korean form of which contains the vowel /ə/, that correspond with the vowel sound /e/, which points to the fact that the Korean form /ə/ must have been once in the past not the present /ə/, but the vowel /e/. The following examples suffice to show this fact.

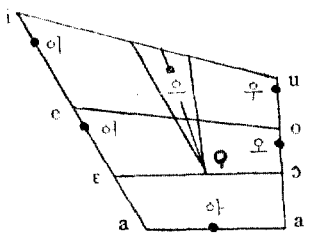
The word 'lord' of the Korean form is /ərən/ which corresepond: with the following Altaic forms: Mo./eren(MNT, 5, 3b); Ma. /edzen/: Ja. /arudzi/. One and the same form /e/ in Mongolian and Manchu, to which the Korean /ə/ corresponds, appears in the common word, 'lord,.

Mo.	/tere/(that)	/eme/(woman)	/ken/(who,which)	/ece/(from)	/tergen/(sourc)
Korean	/djərə/	/əmi/(mother)	/ənɯ/	/eshə/	/d ər/
Ma.	/tere/(that)	/eme/(mother)	/de/(at)	/ere/(this)	/senggi/(blood)
Korean	/djərə/	/əmi/	/e/	/irə/	/shəndzi/

The examples given above suffice to show that there is a great possibitty that the present /ə/ was once /e/.

17. In addition to the facts mentioned above we one more reason to believe that the sound value of the letter /ㅓ/ in Humin Jeongeum was [e]. When we take into consideration the origin of the letter /ㅓ/ itself, we can not but to conclude that it was [e]. In the article /A New Theory of Origin of Hangeur written by the present author he has made

a great effort to expound that the Korean Alphabet, 'Hangeur' is the historical result of development of Gugyeor which had been developed from 'Idu'. However, the letter /ㅓ/ is exactly alike the Mongolisn letter /ㅓ/ which represent the sound /e/. This particular concordance between the Korean letter and that of Mongolisn can not be a pure contingency. Considering the fact that the great linguistician, Shin Shug Ju 申叔舟 was very well verced in Mongolian, it is therefore rather natural and spontaineous to judge that the concordance between them is truly historical. This fact convinces us that we are on the safe side to advocate that the sound value of the letter /ㅓ/ was [e].



18. Now we can visualize the whole structure of the Korean monphthongs of the 15th ceutury on the vowel diagram as shown in the figure No. 1. It shows us a symetric beauty. The dictum 'The useful is the beautiful' is a golden one. Prof. Gim Bang Han set forth an excellent article concerning the structure of the 15th century of the Korean vowels in Donga Munwha (The Culture of East Asia) 1964. He arrived at the same conclusion but on different grounds. He also holds the view that this shifting to the present vowel structure took place before the vowel contaction had taken place. I differ from him in that I hold the view that the shifting of the vowel structure of the 15th century happened due to the vowel contraction, which took place in the 17th century after the invasion of the Japanese under Hideyoshi, Eight Years War from 1592 io 1600.

19. In this short article I have endeavored to prove that the sound value of the letter ㅓ in Hunmin Jeongeum was [e] upon the various

grounds given above. Late Professor Choi Hyon Pae was Lordstar for me who guided me to study linguistics and we together faced the trials under rule of the Japanese. He was not only a great scholar, but a great patriot.

훈민 정음의 중성자「ㅓ」의 음가

김 선 기

1. 훈민 정음에 제정된 스물여덟 글자 가운데 초성 글자가 열일곱 글자 (ㅂㅍㅁ, ㄷㅌㄴ, ㅈㅊㅅ, ㄱㅋㆁ, ㅎㅎㅇ, ㄹㅿ)와 중성 글자 열한 글자 (ㆍㅡㅣ, ㅗㅜ, ㅏㅓ, ㅛㅠ, ㅑㅕ)가 있다.
2. 이 글자들 가운대 지금 쓰지 않는 글자가 닫소리 글자 가운데에는「ㆆㅿ, ㆁ」세 글자가 있고 열소리 글자에는「ㆍ」하나가 있다. 이렇게 사라진 글자의 소리 값에 대하여는 여러 학자가 여러 가지 견해를 연구 발표하였다. 그러나「ㅂ, ㄷ, ㄱ ㅈ」나「ㅓ」글자에 관한 음가가 무엇이었던가에 대하여서는 아무도 문제삼지 아니하여 왔다. 그러나「ㅓ」글자의 소리 값에 대하여는 김 방한 교수가 문제를 삼아「ㅓ」의 훈민정음 발표 당시의 소리값은 〔e〕라는 견해를 이미 발표하였다. 비교 언어학적 입장에서「ㆍ」는 〔ə〕 요「ㅓ」는 〔e〕라는 이론을 전개하였다.
3. 나는 김 교수와 생각은 같이 하나. 그 논거가 다르므로 여기에 필자의 생각을 펴 여러 학계 벗들에게 묻고저 한다. 그 논거는 대개 다섯 가지가 다음과 같이 있다.
4. 첫째로「ㆍ」를 〔ə〕로 풀면 〔ㅣ〕와 〔ㅏ〕 사이에 가장 보편적인 음성 구조가 깨어 진다. 적어도 다섯 홑 열소리(모음) 이상 있는 말의 소리의 구조에서는 〔i,e,a,o,u〕와 같은 밀낱이 있다. 그런데「ㆍ」를 〔ə〕 소리값으로 잡으면 〔e〕가 빠져 균형을 잃은 구조가 되어 부자연하다 이것이 첫째 논리요
5. 둘째 논리는 지금 〔ə〕로 내는 말들이 이조 초기만 하여도「ㅏ」로 나는 것이 있으니,「머리」는「마리」요,「넉」은「나홀」에서 처럼「나」요,「먼」은「만」이요「셋」의 석은「사홀」에서 처럼「사」요「넘」은「남」이었던

것을 알수 있다. 그러니까 지금 〔ə〕 열 소리는 뒤에 생긴 것임을 말하여 준다.

6. 셋재로 알타이 공통 단어에서 지금 〔ə〕로 내는 말들이 〔eren〕 이나 〔ece〕에서 보는 바와 같이 「어런」「에서」와 일치함을 보면 지금 〔ərən〕 이나 〔eshə〕는 〔eshe〕 였던 것을 알아 낼 수가 있다. 그러므로 「ㅓ」는 그 소리 값이 지금처럼 〔ə〕 소리가 아니오 일즉이 〔e〕 였던 것을 찾아 낼 수가 있다.

7. 넷째로 만주말이나 몽고말 책들에서 〔e〕 소리값을 모두 「ㅓ」 글자로 적은 것을 보면 「ㅓ」 글자로 〔e〕를 적을 수 있었다는 것은 「ㅓ」가 그런 범주에 들어 갈 수가 있었으니까 그러한 것이다.

8. 다섯째로 「ㅓ」 글자의 소리값을 나톤 한문글자가 「業」 자다. 「如業者中聲」이라고 하였다. 그런데 「業」 자의 당시 북평 발음은 〔je〕 다. 곧 〔e〕 다. 그뿐 아니라 天「텬」, 見「견」, 現「현」, 前「젼」 年「년」, 面「연」, 言「언」 은 모두 지금도 〔tjen〕 〔gien〕, 〔hien〕, 〔jien〕, 〔njen〕 〔mien〕 〔jen〕 들이라 모두 「ㅓ」 는 〔e〕로 읽음을 알 수가 있다 또 일본식 한자 발음에서도 〔teŋ〕 〔keŋ〕 〔geŋ〕 「jeŋ〕 〔neŋ〕, 〔meŋ〕 〔gen〕 으로 읽어 〔e〕가 보존 되어 있다. 이런 사실로 보더라도 「ㅓ」는 「e」라 발음하였을 것을 가르킨다.

9. 더욱이 신 숙 주 申叔舟의 "四聲通攷"에 중국의 한자음과 우리나라 한자음을 비교하여 말하기를, 今 訓民正音出於本國之書 若用於 漢書 則必變而通 乃得無礙라 하였다. 여기에 乃得無礙라 한것은 〔e〕와 「ㅓ」의 발음은 interchangeable, 또는 convertible 하다는 뜻이니까 「거의 같다」는 뜻이다. 그러니까 「ㅓ」는 「e」 였다는 것을 입증한다.

10. 위에서 말한 바와 같이 「ㅓ」의 「음가」는 훈민정음 반포 당시에는 〔e〕 요 뒤에 〔ə〕로 바뀌었다고 본다. 그러면 언제 바뀌었을까 나는 〔ei〕>〔e〕>〔ai〕>〔ɛ〕 〔oi〕>〔ø〕, 〔ui〕>〔y〕의 vowel contraction 이 일어난 뒤에 「ㅓ」의 소리값이 〔ə〕 로 바뀌었다고 본다. 그러면 contraction 은

언제 일어 났느냐고 하는 문제가 꼬리를 물고 일어난다. 그것은 대개 임난이 일어난 뒤가 아닌가 싶다. 언어의 격변은 대개 사회적 격동이 있은 뒤에 있는 것이 상식인 까닭이다.

11. 위에서 든 이러가지 논거에 좇아 필자는 「훈민정음」 반포 당시의 중성자 「ㅓ」의 소리값은 〔e〕 이었음을 증명하려 한 것이다. 그리고 김방한 교수의 논증 방법과 아울러 「국어 학계」에서 「훈민정음」의 중성자 「ㅓ」의 「음가」를 〔ə〕 이었던듯이 가르치는 것을 바로잡아야 옳다고 생각한다.

12. 아울러서 닫소리 글자에 「ㅂㅃㄷㄸㄱㄲㅅㅆ」를 된소리로 보는 것이나 「ㅸ, ㅿ, ㆅ, ㅆ」를 된소리 (unvoiced and unaspirated consonant)로 보는 것도 빨리 바로 잡아야 한다. 외솔 최 현 배 스승이 여희신 뒤에 이글을 써 선생님을 생각하는 보람으로 삼는 것은 한끝 애닯고 한끝 두렵다. 또 「한글」로 쓰지 않고 잉글리시로 적은 것은 가라 사람의 생각을 온 누리에 펴고저 그리 하였으니 너그러이 보시기를 빌어 마지 않는다.