

## Chatterbox #231 – K-pop

### Episode description

Have you ever heard of K-pop? How about BTS? BTS is the name of a Korean boy band whose popularity is sweeping the globe. In this episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about the ins and outs of K-pop, and even some slang terms related to this music movement.

### Fun fact

The Korean boy band BTS has made history in so many different ways over the past few years! BTS was the first Korean band to present in front of the United Nations, they were the first Korean group to hit #1 in the Billboard Artist 100 Chart, they were able to present an award at the US Grammys, and their concerts sell out all over the world within a matter of minutes. Many say that the band's success is due to their charm and their dedication to connecting with fans on social media.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- To be in one's prime
- To be up with [something]
- To spark a passion
- To be in the same boat
- Diehard
- To hype [something] up



## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

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Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English Podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey, Kassy, how are you?

Kassy: I'm doing good, how about you?

Andrew: I'm doing really well. Kassy, I woke up this morning quite early and took a train to Gwangju, where you live, took about 2 hours and it kind of blew my mind when I was walking to your place because I realized that between my apartment and your apartment, I only had to do about 10 minutes of walking. I walked about 2 minutes to the subway station in Seoul, got on a subway, transferred off the subway to a bullet train, transferred off the bullet train to another subway, got off the subway, walked for about 8 minutes, and I arrived at your place.

Kassy: That is insane.

Andrew: So from one side of the country to the other side, but I only walked for about 10 minutes. Wild, right?

Kassy: That's the world we live in now, hey?

Andrew: Yeah.

Kassy, today we're going to do a Chatterbox episode about K-pop.

Kassy: K-pop.

Andrew: So for our listeners that don't know, Chatterbox is the series where we have totally natural English conversations and we let everyone listen in. It's as if you are in the room with us talking about this topic right now.

Andrew: And I do have to apologize that this is a rather Korea-centric topic, and I know that we have listeners from all around the world and perhaps if you live in the Philippines or Brazil or Spain, maybe you get tired of hearing me talk about Korea, but I think that K-pop is a kind of global phenomena right now. So it's fitting to talk about it because probably in wherever you're listening to this, there will be K-pop fans.

So, Kassy, we'll talk about K-pop in just a moment but, before we do that, I would like to let everyone know that there is a study guide for this episode available on our website, Culips.com. It features a transcript, some detailed vocabulary explanations, and examples of some of the key expressions that you'll hear us use here today. There's also a quiz to test your listening comprehension and some prompts that you can use for writing practice or speaking practice. So if you would like to study along with the study guide, and we highly recommend that you do, just visit our website, Culips.com, to download it.

OK, Kassy, K-pop. Let's start with a definition, it's always a good place to start.

Kassy: OK.

Andrew: How would you define K-pop?

Kassy: K stands for Korean.

Andrew: Yup.

Kassy: So Korean pop. I would define it as a series of idols which are famous, young Korean men and woman who study and train incredibly hard from age 13 to become these singing legends in Korea.

Andrew: Singing legends, yeah. So K-pop is a genre of music, but I actually think that it's more than music. If you think about it just as music, you're not really talking about the whole package. It's more like a form of entertainment, there's a big visual aspect to it, too.

Kassy: And style.

Andrew: Style and dancing. So it's really a package that includes catchy, up-tempo music and dancing and style, costumes and wardrobe.

Kassy: It's very colourful.

Andrew: Very colourful, yeah. So it originates here in Korea, where we are. But it spread across the globe, and I think K-pop **is in its prime** right now, globally.

- Kassy: Yeah, that's called the Hallyu Wave?
- Andrew: Yeah, the Hallyu Wave. I guess the "ryu" is wave, so the Korean Wave.
- Kassy: Yes, the Korean Wave.
- Andrew: Yeah. So, in many countries around the world, there are groups like BTS and Blackpink that are seeing enormous popularity. There's a big music festival in the States called Coachella. Have you heard of Coachella?
- Kassy: Yeah, I have.
- Andrew: It just happened a couple of weeks ago, and one of the headliners at Coachella was Blackpink.
- Kassy: I heard that, yes.
- Andrew: Yeah, so that just goes to show that even, well, I would say that Coachella is probably the biggest music festival in the States. So at the biggest music festival in the States, you have a Korean K-pop act headlining. And they're singing all in Korean for the most part, they're not singing in English. So this is quite incredible.
- Kassy: They always say music is like a universal language, right?
- Andrew: Right.
- Kassy: And K-pop is definitely evidence of that.
- Andrew: Right. So, what about you? Do you like K-pop, are you a fan?
- Kassy: Truthfully, I'm not a huge fan of K-pop, but I do love indie music in Korea. Have you heard of Hyukoh?
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Kassy: Hyukoh band.
- Andrew: Yeah, I actually saw them play a concert here in Gwangju like maybe a year and a half ago.
- Kassy: I was there, too!
- Andrew: Really?
- Kassy: Oh my gosh.
- Andrew: There was a lot of people there, I didn't see you.

- Kassy: But anyways, back to K-pop. When I first came to Korea and I was studying Korean, I did listen to the big names back then, like Big Bang, f(x).
- Andrew: Girls' Generation.
- Kassy: Exactly, yeah. But these days I'm not really **up with the current BTS trends** and all that.
- Andrew: I'm exactly the same way, I don't follow K-pop very closely, I think it's impossible to ignore if you live in Korea, just because you hear it in so many different places on the street. When you're walking down the street, you'll hear it blasting from different stores and in cafes and restaurants. It's hard to ignore. I wouldn't classify myself as a K-pop fan, but I wouldn't say that I hate it, either. I think there's lots of interesting things about K-pop but, yeah, it doesn't really **spark a passion** or an obsession in me like it does for some fans around the world.
- Kassy: Yeah, **I'm in the same boat**. Actually, have you heard of those fans who buy, you know, dozens or hundreds of CDs so that they can go to a fan signing?
- Andrew: I have heard about this, yeah. This is one of the more bizarre aspects of K-pop culture to Westerners, I think, it's that a lot of groups will have these fan meetings, right? Where you can go and meet the band and get an autograph and a picture, that sort of thing. But it's not open to just anybody, it's open only to the most extreme fans. The people who buy the most merchandise.
- Kassy: The **diehard** fans.
- Andrew: The **diehard** fans. So I've heard stories of friends of friends of friends who are these **diehard** fans that will spend thousands of dollars on CDs, buying the same record, hundreds of times, just to get to meet some of the people from one of their favourite groups.
- Kassy: Yup, and then they have to resell them at pennies on the dollar.
- Andrew: I guess it's just a more sophisticated way of really charging a huge fee for the fan meeting, right? Instead of having a ticket that's \$2000, you have to buy \$2000 worth of merchandise to get into the event.
- Kassy: It's a crazy culture. Actually, have you also heard of the click culture?
- Andrew: Click culture? I think I know what you mean, but could you explain it?

- Kassy: I don't know if it's click culture, but when people are trying to get tickets to a concert, especially BTS, it's like 1 millisecond decides whether you're going to get a ticket or not.
- Andrew: Oh, OK, I see.
- Kassy: As soon as the tickets go online, it's like click, click, click, click. And I heard that some **diehard** fans actually test their clicking skills on other venues, like baseball games and, like, no-name concerts.
- Andrew: Wow, to see, to practice so that they can get the ticket. I haven't heard of that, that's interesting. But I have heard of something that's similar, which you may or may not know of, and that is the YouTube videos. If you look at some of the top 10 YouTube videos of all time, a lot of them are K-pop. They'll have hundreds of millions of views. And I think it was PSY's *Gangnam Style* that was the first video to exceed 1 billion views.
- Kassy: The first ever?
- Andrew: The first-ever video to exceed a billion views on YouTube.
- Kassy: Wow.
- Andrew: And so I was curious about why these videos have so many plays, and I realized it's the **diehard** fans. There's websites you can go to that will loop YouTube videos. It'll just play through and, as soon as it finishes, it will play again. And these fans are playing the video all night while they sleep. They'll put their speaker on mute and then just have the video loop over and over and over and over again, like all day or all night. And so although these videos look really popular and they are popular, their numbers are artificially inflated because of these looping bots that people are using.
- Kassy: Yeah, wow, I've never heard of that.
- Andrew: So K-pop fans can be quite obsessed, I guess that's something that we've uncovered.
- Another interesting element of K-pop that I've noticed is its influence on the English language, because K-pop is a kind of global phenomenon like we've talked about. People are talking about K-pop online in either Korean or English, and I've noticed that there's a lot of kind of specialized slang that is used to talk about K-pop that we don't use in any other style of English.
- Kassy: What kind of things?
- Andrew: For example, I'm gonna quiz you, OK? I'm gonna say a kind of K-pop slang and I want to know if you know what it means.

- Kassy: OK.
- Andrew: OK. Bias. If you have a bias, what does it mean? Who's your bias?
- Kassy: Yeah, that's like your favourite idol in the K-pop community.
- Andrew: Yeah, exactly. Your favourite star, your favourite idol is your bias. Now, we don't use that word to mean favourite in any other aspect of English. I think it's only in K-pop.
- Kassy: You're right, I didn't think about it.
- Andrew: OK, next one. A comeback.
- Kassy: That's when a lot of members, male members, have to go to military service in Korea, so I heard that if they leave and the band breaks up for a while, they have a comeback tour.
- Andrew: Yeah, you're essentially correct. You're close, because we actually have this expression in English, too, a comeback, right? A pop star can make a comeback. But the way that we use it in English is if the pop star has disappeared almost off the face of the Earth for a long time, like 10 or 15 years, nobody remembers them, really, and then boom they're back with a new album and a new start to their career. But in K-pop, every time that an artist releases a new record or a new CD, then it's a comeback.
- Kassy: Ah, OK.
- Andrew: OK, so it's, like, maybe, for example, Blackpink, who we talked about earlier, if they came out with a record 6 months ago and then right now if they came out with another record, we'd say it's a comeback.
- Kassy: It's kind of just trying **to hype up the publicity** as much as you can.
- Andrew: Exactly, exactly. And I think you're right, because when male members of K-pop groups have to go to the army and then they finish their army service, there's always a comeback, right? It's always, "Hey, we're back with a new record." But, yeah, so there's a difference in the way that we use these two terms between K-pop English and regular English.
- Oh, yeah, the final one, army. Do you know what army is?
- Kassy: I think it is a term used to describe BTS fans, correct?
- Andrew: Exactly, exactly.
- Kassy: Three for three.

Andrew: So, BTS, this group, this boy band, they have a really, really obsessive fan base. And they're so obsessive and so big that they're called army.

Kassy: Yeah, I see them on random YouTube videos, like videos not remotely related to K-pop, and they'll just show up and say, "Is army here?" "I'm here." "I'm here." "I'm here."

Andrew: Yeah, it's really strange to me. So, yeah, I've noticed that there's this new kind of English popping up to describe K-pop. Yeah, it's kind of a little bit of Korean and English mixed together.

Kassy: Konglish.

Andrew: Konglish, yeah. Interesting.

Well, Kassy, I think we will leave it at here for today. Before we wrap up, though, I would like to remind all of our listeners that there is a study guide for this episode available on our website, Culips.com. And I would encourage you, as well, to send us an email and let us know about the K-pop culture in your country. Are there people in your country that listen to K-pop? Is it popular? I have the gut feeling that it is quite popular all around the world, but maybe I'm wrong about that. So send us a message and let us know. Our email address is [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com). Also do us a favour please and subscribe to the Culips English Podcast on your favourite podcasting service. It would really help us out a ton. You can find us on Apple Podcast, Spotify, Google Podcast, whatever service you use, we will be there. And same goes for social media, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. You name it, we're there, search for Culips English Podcast and give us a follow.

That's it for us, we'll be back soon with another episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye, everybody.

Kassy: Bye.



## Detailed Explanations

### To be in one's prime

Idiom

If someone or something is **in its prime**, then it is the happiest or most successful period of that person or that thing's existence. In this episode, Andrew says that K-pop is currently **in its prime**. In other words, he's saying that K-pop is the most popular it's ever been in history, and most likely this is the most popular it ever will be.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be in one's prime**:

Vince:	How's Rufus feeling? I heard you had to take him to the vet last week.
Cheyenne:	He's doing all right. He fell going down the stairs last week and hurt his back leg. He's not a young puppy anymore.
Vince:	Yeah, I remember when he <b>was in his prime</b> , he used to jump 5 feet in the air and chase squirrels across the backyard for hours.
Cheyenne:	Ha, he hasn't been able to jump even a couple inches for a couple of years now. That might be a good thing, though. He used to give visitors such a fright.

Monty:	Did you hear about Jacky? He broke his arm last night.
Richard:	No! He can't pitch without his arm!
Monty:	Yeah, it's a real shame. He <b>was in his prime</b> , too. Heard he got an offer from some major league team and everything.
Richard:	How'd it happen?
Monty:	Don't know, but it doesn't matter now. What's done is done.
Richard:	Such a darn shame. His baseball career is finished even before it really began.

## To be up with [something]

### Idiom

**To be up with [something]** is a slang term someone might use to show that he or she is still cool and knowledgeable about something. In this episode, Kassy says she is not **up with the current BTS trends**, so she is saying that he doesn't know much about what BTS is doing these days.

This phrase is an abbreviation of the phrase to keep **up with [something]**. For example, to keep **up with the times** is to stay modern about current trends and social changes.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be up with [something]**:

Gracey:	Marge, have you heard of YOLO?
Marge:	Yo-yo? Yeah, I've heard of those.
Gracey:	No, not yo-yo! YOLO! My granddaughter told me it means "you only live once." All the young'uns are saying it these days.
Marge:	Why are you interested in learning that useless young-people talk, anyways?
Gracey:	I might be old, but I'm not dead! I wanna be a cool grandma, you know, <b>be up with all the cool kid slang</b> .
Marge:	Oh boy ...

Thomas:	Hey, Darren. Do you think you can help me out? I got into a bit of a bad situation and I'm gonna need some legal help.
Darren:	You know I'm not a lawyer anymore, right?
Thomas:	Yeah, I know, but you've gotta have connections right, or at least some knowledge to help me out?
Darren:	What's this about, anyways? What kind of trouble are you in?
Thomas:	Let's just say it involves divorce and an evil soon-to-be ex-wife.
Darren:	Ah, sorry to hear that, man. Well, I'm not exactly <b>up with all the know-how on divorce cases</b> , but I'll get you in touch with one of my old law school buddies. He's a divorce lawyer now in the city, and he'll probably be able to help you out.

## To spark a passion

### Idiom

A spark is the first small particle of flame that grows to produce fire; therefore, to spark something means to start something and make it grow. Something that starts small and grows bigger as more time and energy is put into it is said to be sparked. For example, to **spark a passion** is to start a love and passion for something. Or to spark an interest is to become interested in something and quickly become obsessed with it.

In this episode, Andrew says that K-pop does not **spark a passion** in him—it does not make him eager to hear more—but it has **sparked a passion** in many fans around the world.

Here are a couple more examples with **to spark a passion**:

Reporter:	When did you know that you wanted to become a writer?
Clive:	Well, actually, it was my high school English teacher who <b>sparked my passion</b> for reading and writing. She really encouraged me to pursue my dreams and helped me reach my full potential.
Reporter:	Wow, she must have been a really amazing teacher.
Clive:	Yes, she was probably the best I ever had. I can't thank her enough for all of the help she gave me when I was in high school.

Sarah:	What're you doing? You look really focused.
Georgina:	Oh, yeah, it's the pet project of mine I've been working on. You remember that documentary we saw on plastic consumption and the global scale of its effects?
Sarah:	Yeah, I remember, for sure. That documentary made me feel guilty about ever using plastic again, not that it's possible to avoid using it.
Georgina:	Well, that documentary <b>sparked a passion</b> in me, and I've been coming up with ideas for reducing waste in our community.
Sarah:	Wow, Georgina, that's great! How can I help the cause?

## To be in the same boat

### Idiom

**To be in the same boat** is to be in the same situation as someone else. Usually this phrase is used to talk about negative situations that people experience together. For example, a group of students who all got the stomach flu at the same time would **be in the same boat**; they are all suffering through the flu together.

This phrase originates from ancient Greece as a way to talk about the risks and dangers that every passenger in a small boat at sea must face together. Everyone **in the same boat** will live together or die together, succeed together or fail together.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be in the same boat**:

Tracy:	I heard Rick got fired last week for showing up to work late one too many times. I feel bad for the guy.
Marty:	Don't feel too bad for him. From what I heard, we might all <b>be in the same boat</b> before too long.
Tracy:	What? What do you mean?
Marty:	It might just be a rumour, but I heard the company is in bad shape. They might start laying us off at any moment.
Tracy:	Oh my god! This is terrible news.
Marty:	Don't go spreading this information, though, if you know what's good for you. It will only cause panic.

Rajeev:	Man, this sucks. I found out that I got put on cleaning duty for the school fundraiser event this year.
Andreja:	Well, looks like we're <b>in the same boat</b> —so did I. It could be worse. We could have been part of the set-up crew. I heard they have to get to school by 6 a.m. to help set up the event all next week.
Rajeev:	You're right. That IS worse.
Andreja:	Yup, it's always best to look on the bright side of things.

## Diehard

Noun or adjective

A **diehard** is a person who is obsessed about and extremely supportive of someone or something. In this episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about **diehard** K-pop fans and all that they do to support the idols that they love. People can be **diehards** of any type of movement or social trend, such as **diehard Republicans**, **diehard football enthusiast**., or **diehard Justin Bieber fans**.

Here are a couple more examples with **diehard**:

Juan:	Have you seen Kasey? It's been, like, days since I've seen him.
Mo:	Oh, yeah, he's at home playing Overwatch. You know he's a <b>diehard gamer</b> , right?
Juan:	Yeah, but still. It's been almost a week now. Doesn't he miss us or, you know, sunlight?
Mo:	What can I say? He's obsessed. The only thing we can do is wait until he gets bored of it ... Or dies from a lack of vitamin D.

Clarisse:	Oh my goodness! Big Seven is having a concert here in July!
Riley:	No way! I think I've just died and gone to heaven.
Clarisse:	Don't get too excited yet. First, we have to find a way to get our hands on some of those tickets.
Riley:	Well, that's gonna be almost impossible. You know all the insane <b>diehard fans</b> are gonna get them all first.
Clarisse:	Riley, we're some of those <b>diehard fans</b> , remember? We can do this!

## To hype [something] up

Phrasal verb

**To hype [something] up** is to make something sound or appear extremely exciting and cool. For example, advertising agencies use celebrities and flashy commercials to **hype up whatever they are trying to sell**.

**To hype [someone] up** is to get someone really excited about something. For example, sports players will **hype each other up** before a game, to make sure everyone is excited and ready to play as hard as they can.

Here are a couple more examples with **to hype [something] up**:

Gabby:	Did you see Avengers: Endgame?
Titi:	That superhero movie that's been <b>hyped up</b> all over the internet? Nah, action movies aren't really my thing.
Gabby:	Really? I heard it busted all the previous box-office records, though. Some people have even gone to see it multiple times.
Titi:	Still not interested. Maybe I'll check it out when it's available for download.

Tyler:	Are you going to Chris' party tonight? People have been <b>hyping it up</b> all week. I heard it's gonna be absolutely insane!
Tyrone:	Yeah, I'll probably come check it out. Don't get your hopes up, though. These parties are always the same: drinking, loud music, and someone throwing up in the bathroom.
Tyler:	Dude, you're such a buzzkill. You sound like my grandmother instead of my best friend.
Tyrone:	These kinda parties just aren't my thing, all right? I'll go, though, just so I can see you making a fool of yourself trying to hit on girls.
Tyler:	On second thought, I think you should just stay home.

## Quiz

**1. A diehard is someone who:**

- a) is really obsessed and supportive of something
- b) tries too hard to please other people
- c) lives really dangerously
- d) makes everyone around them feel uncomfortable

**2. If a dog is in his prime, he is\_\_\_\_\_.**

- a) really old
- b) in a lot of trouble
- c) really active and healthy
- d) eating his dinner

**3. People who experience the same situation are said to be in the same \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a) blanket
- b) boat
- c) room
- d) cup of tea

**4. Which word does not have the same meaning as hype up?**

- a) excite
- b) promote
- c) curb
- d) advertise

**5. Which word cannot be used with in the phrase a spark of \_\_\_\_\_?**

- a) passion
- b) anger
- c) interest
- d) time

## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Do you enjoy K-pop? Who is your favourite group or idol?
2. Is K-pop popular in your country? How so?
3. What music style is your country famous for?
4. What are you passionate about? What or who sparked your passion?
5. Are you a diehard fan of something? What is it and why?



## Quiz Answers

1.a    2.c    3.b    4.c    5.d

### Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Kassy White

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free, *Let It Go* by Scott Dugdale

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Kassy White

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox

Image: Oğuz Şerbetci (Unsplash.com)