Korea has used the administrative regions and geographical features to define its territories. The administrative classification refers to classifying regions according to administrative districts while the geographical classification assesses regions into homogeneous and functional regions. In Korea, a combination of the administrative and geographical classification has been applied. For example, the distribution of mountains and rivers enabled the geographical classification by living areas and administrative districts established from Goryeo Dynasty became the root of the contemporary administrative districts. The previous administrative districts have been considered significant in Korea’s regional classification. The contemporary regional classification of Korea is similar to the traditional regional classification that descended from the Goryeo and Joseon Dynasties. Regional differences are getting narrower today than in the past thanks to the development of efficient transportation that enables the transfer of traditional values from one region to another. Under these circumstances, the distributions of various dialects that are still used by local residents today are an important indicator in the historical classification of regions.

In specific terms for South Korea only, the classification of regions based on dialects largely involves 18 dialects, namely the standard, Gangwon, Chungcheong, Jeolla, Gyeongsang, and Jeju dialects. This classification was used in a 2010 survey performed by the National Institute of the Korean Language that set out to measure Koreans’ consciousness of language dialects. The South Korean national survey showed that the percentages of those who claimed that they use the standard dialect ranked highest at 34.4%, the Gyeongsang dialect was ranked at 30.9%, the Jeolla dialect (اقة) at 17%, the Chungcheong dialect at 9.2%, and the Gangwon dialect at 6.9%, the Jeju dialect at 2.8%, and the North Korean dialect at 0.7%. The ratio of those who use the local dialect is affected by population movements and urban developments. In general terms, the ratio of those who replied that they use the local dialect in the Hwanghae region was higher than that in other regions.