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# ***K'ombineishy\_n P'ijahago K'ok'ak'olla Juseyo*** **(I'll Have a Combination Pizza and Coca-Cola):** **English Loanwords in the Korean Language**

Leif Olsen

“*Hawaiian p'ija-eda p'ainaep'ŭrago p'ep'ŏroni mani nŏŏ juseyo!*”<sup>1</sup> (“We want the Hawaiian pizza—go heavy on the pineapple and pepperoni!”) is not an uncommon thing to hear these days in South Korea. Not far from the historic Kyŏngbok Palace, you can enter a Pizza Hut, Wendy’s, or Burger King and the whole menu is in *hangŭlized* English. *Hangŭl* is the Korean alphabet, a phonetic system of vowels and consonants, which has the versatility to transform English loanwords into familiar Korean phonemes. Koreans<sup>2</sup> have borrowed thousands of foreign words. Many of those words are entering the language continuously—so many that already five percent of Korean vocabulary is foreign-derived (Tranter, 1997, p. 132). Ninety percent of those foreign words are from English (p. 132).

English loanwords are not limited to fast-food cuisine, but they can also be heard in Korean marketplaces describing clothing and furniture (*sŭwet'ŏ* [“sweater”], *tŭresŭ* [“dress”], *t'eibŭl* [“table”], and *sop'a* [“sofa”]) and as commands on basketball courts (*P'aesŭ!* [“Pass!”], *Shyut!* [“Shoot!”]). English has infiltrated Korean popular music and literature. It’s on T.V. (*t'ellebi*), on the radio (*radio*), and in the news (*nyusŭ*), especially the sports section (*sŭp'och'ŭ sekshyŏn*). To what extent has English affected the Korean language? This paper 1) explores the history of English loanwords in Korean, 2) gives a brief introduction to romanized Korean and *hangŭlized* English in order to explain

Korean phonetics and phonemes, and 3) exposes the ever-increasing use of English loanwords in everyday conversation.

## **History of English Loanwords in Korean**

To trace the origin of English loanwords in Korean, we need to go back to the mid-to late-1500's when Koreans set up trade with Portugal, Spain, and shortly thereafter with the Netherlands. These early visitors were the first to open Korea to trade relations with the West and introduce Western words (Pae, 1976, pp. 304-5). The words *ppang*, from the Portuguese word *pão* for *bread*, *tambae* (“cigarette”), from the Spanish *tabaco* for *tobacco* (p. 306), and *ammonia*, originally borrowed from the Dutch (p. 303), can be seen in any corner store. Also as a result of this early Western influence, a huge number of Koreans were religiously converted. Hence, a Christian vocabulary also developed, as in *Yesu Kŭrisŭdo*, Jesus Christ. Today Korea is the most Christian nation in mainland Asia. These early traders opened the Korean language to foreign words and set the groundwork for the subsequent barrage of English loanwords.

From 1910 to 1945 Korea was occupied by Japan. Japanese was taught at school and everyone was required to adopt a Japanese name. Ironically, it was in these bleak circumstances that Koreans began to glean their vast English vocabulary when “some established Western loanwords in Japanese were borrowed into Korean” (Tranter, 1997, p. 135). Tranter has called

these words “hybrid Anglo-Japanese loans” (p. 132).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Japanese were successfully modernizing Korea, along came foreign ideas, clothes, and foods—and, of course, the loanwords that name them. For example, it was through the Japanese that Koreans received the word for *shirt*. The Japanese first changed it to *shatsu* and then Koreans pronounced it their own way to say *shyassū* (Tranter, 1997, p. 136). Some other hybrid loans from that period include *bucket* and *propeller*. The Japanese transcribed them to fit their phonology, and Koreans subsequently changed the Japanese variations to *paknessū* (p. 136) and *p'urop'era*. Koreans have revised the orthography for many hybrid Anglo-Japanese loanwords to imitate the English pronunciation more closely, or they've simply taken them out of the language (p. 139). They have since changed *p'urop'era* to *p'ūrop'ellō* to sound more like the English original, *propeller*.

The tremendous influx of foreign loanwords began after 1945 and continues to this day. As Koreans quickly espoused practices from abroad, their vocabulary increased. Going *polling* (“bowling”), following the latest clothing *p'aeshyōn* (“fashions”), doing *eōrobiks\_* (“aerobics”), eating fast food, getting a *p'ama* (“perm”) – all of these are common activities for Koreans. These activities are generous sources for introducing English loanwords. The past 50 years have seen Koreans let many foreign words into their language. Most recently, computers and the internet have added a multitude of English words into Korean, including these: *sop'ūt'ūweō* (“software”), *sōbō* (“server”) (Tranter, 1997, p. 144), and *int'ōnet* (“internet”).

### English Words Transcribed to Korean *Hangŭl*

When Koreans use loanwords in their language, they spell it out in their language's alphabet, called *hangŭl*. This unique phonetic system was developed in 1446 by King Sejong the Great, and South Korea celebrates National Alphabet Day (*Hangŭllal*) to honor him. With the invention of *hangŭl*, Korean became accessible to more people<sup>3</sup> and now 96% of the nation's 45 million people are literate (“Korea, South,” 1996).

This 500-year-old alphabet can be seen all over the streets of Korea. Flashing *hangŭl* neon signs in Inch'ōn and Seoul invite people to come have *panilla aisŭk'ūrim* (“vanilla ice cream”), eat *sŭt'eik'ū* (“steak”) and use a *haendŭp'on* (“handphone,” which is a “cell phone”). *Hangŭl* is even found on streets in Los Angeles and Chicago and on University Avenue in Provo. From the above examples, it is obvious that Koreans change the pronunciation of English when they *hangŭlize* it.

First, let's briefly explain how Korean is romanized. The apostrophes /'/ indicate aspirated consonants (/ch'/, /k'/, /t'/, /p'/), used frequently in loanwords. The vowel /ō/ is a mid, back, rounded vowel, equivalent to the IPA /ɔ̃/ sound, and /ū/ is a high, back, rounded vowel and is closest to /U/. The /ū/ phoneme is used abundantly between double and triple consonants and makes some loanwords sound choppy, like *t'osŭt'ū* (“toast”), *sŭt'ūraik'ū* (“strike”), *p'ūrench'i p'ūrai* (“french fries”), and *sŭt'ūresŭ* (“stress”). But as Koreans have become more aware of actual English pronunciation, these /ū/ sounds have begun

to disappear, as the study with the school students shows (Appendix A).

*Hangŭlization* also requires a brief explanation. To transcribe English into the Korean alphabet, there are some changes that need to be made. For example, the consonants /z/, /v/, and /f/ don't exist in modern Korean. The following chart includes some of the major changes:

English /f/	Korean /p' or /h/
/θ/	/t/, /d/, or /t'/
/ð/	/t/ or /d/
/s/	before certain vowels, /sh/
/v/	/b/ or /p/
/z/ and /ž/	/ch/ or /j/

/l/\* at beginning of word, /r/ (a flap); middle of word, /ll/

/r/\* at beginning of word or middle, /r/ (a flap); end of word or before consonant, omitted

\*In Korean /l/ and /r/ are allophones for the same Korean character, the liquid *riŭl*.

The Korean alphabet cannot account for every English sound, thereby making some loanwords indistinguishable at first glance. Although differences can be distinguished from context. The minimal pair *pork* and *fork* are both *p'ok'ŭ* in Korean. *Race* and *lace* are both *reisŭ*; *laser* and *razor* are both *reijŏ*. *Rŏbŏ* can be both *lover* and *rubber*. Also, the /n/ in Korean is "assimilated when juxtaposed to the liquid phoneme [l/], since they all share the same point of articulation" (Pak-Covell, 1989, p. 5). The Korean /n/ becomes an /l/ when it comes directly before or after the Korean liquid *riŭl* (see list above). *Walnut* is spelled *wolnŏt* but pronounced *wollŏt*, and *Greenland* is spelled *kŭrinlaendŭ* but said *kŭrillaendŭ*.

A study conducted at the Meridian School, a private school in Provo, revealed

interesting pronunciations of English-derived loanwords. Seven Korean students, ages 14-18, were shown 21 flashcards, each with two loanwords written on them. The first word was printed in English and the second in Korean. I asked each student to pronounce the first word as though they were speaking English, and the second one as though they were speaking their native language. For the most part, the students read the flashcards accurately in both languages. But the students, having a substantial background in English, pronounced some of the Korean words in unpredicted ways.

One interesting "mispronounced" feature was the loss of the intermediary /ŭ/ in consonant clusters and after some consonants, as in the examples *toast'ŭ* ("toast"), *ice cream*, *dunk shoot*, and *bus*. An initial /l/ was even pronounced in *lamp'ŭ*. See Appendix A for more detailed results. Greater knowledge of the English language among the youth apparently has an influence on the pronunciation of English-derived loanwords in Korean.

Students in Korea take a mandatory ten years of English in the schools. Recently native English speakers have been teaching at schools, private institutes, and universities. Thousands of Korean students have studied abroad in English-speaking countries, mostly the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.K. Business and government also send their employees to these countries to learn English and conduct transactions. The younger generation get their English off American T.V. programs and the radio. Who knows – maybe new consonants for /f/, /v/, and /z/ will officially enter the Korean language.

### English Loanwords in Popular Usage

To demonstrate dramatically how much English has influenced the Korean language, I studied various sources that present contemporary Korean language. These sources include a sports article and a skiing advertisement, both from the *Hankuk Ilbo* (1998), one of Korea's major newspapers.<sup>4</sup> Also an article about postmodernist art from *Shigak* (Jo, 1997), a journal of art studies, and a T.V. dramedy, *Weding Tūresū* ("Wedding Dress") (Yi, 1997) were carefully analyzed. I chose those particular subjects—football, skiing, international art, popular T.V.—because English loanwords appear frequently in those domains.

Red pencil in hand, I began to underline every loanword in the newspaper article and advertisement, and it surprised me that among all the words the reporter used, 35% are English-derived loanwords! Many are team names like *Tenbō Pūrongk'osū* ("Denver Broncos"), *Kūrinbei P'aek'ōsū* ("Green Bay Packers"), and *P'ich'ūbōgū Sūt'illōsū* ("Pittsburgh Steelers").<sup>5</sup>

The advertisement bidding all to come ski in Utah is about 30% loanwords. Place names, such as Park City, Deer Valley, and Alta, and the words *full day* are printed in the ad in plain English. An official study of 1994 Korean newspaper advertisements showed that 27 out of 50 "had at least one English word in the main caption" (Tranter, 1997, p. 145). Both newspaper items I examined contain loanwords pertaining to their respective topics of football: *t'im* ("team"), *ch'aemp'ion* ("champion"), *t'ai* ("tie"), *rōningbaek* ("running back"), and *ōdūbaent'iji* ("advantage"); and skiing: *k'osū* ("course"), *p'audō* ("powder"), *sūk'i* ("ski"), *sūk'io* ("skier"), and *Yut'a* ("Utah").

For a full list of loanwords see Appendixes C and E.

At a contemporary postmodernist art show in Kwangju, South Korea, artists from all over the world gathered to share their talents. Koreans needed to collect foreign words for this occasion—an international convergence of theories and artistic ideas. Jo's article (1997) was quite long, and even though there were many loanwords from various languages, they only accounted for 5% of the article. The English-derived loanwords include *k'ōmisyōnō* ("commissioner"), *imiji* ("image"), *p'osūt'ū modōnijūm* ("postmodernism"), *sūk'ech'i* ("sketch"), and *sūp'onsō* ("sponsor").

The T.V. series *Weding Tūresū* ("Wedding-Dress") (Yi, 1997) is about a wedding dress designer, her younger sister, and their family. The show attests to the influence of English loanwords in Korean. Recently produced, loanwords appear at a rate of one word every minute and 12 seconds. In everyday conversation, words like *mit'ing* ("meeting," which means "blind date"), *t'omat'o* ("tomato"), *poillō* ("boiler"), and *pijūnisū* ("business") appear.

For a full list of loanwords to Jo (1997) and Yi (1997), see Appendixes B and D.

### Conclusion

North Korea, still under communist rule, refuses to accept English loanwords into their language. North Koreans promote their own Korean words for *radio*, *television*, *ice cream*, and *bus*. With the peninsula's impending reunification, we wonder which words will survive: the "pure" North Korean words or the South Korean English loanwords – or will both words be used interchangeably? I predict that with English's wider international usage, the loanwords will eventually overrule.

Koreans recognize that English is the world's language. Fluency in English is a really valuable asset. It's even mandatory in many well-paying jobs. English vocabulary is increasing rapidly in Korea. Loanword pronunciation is becoming more and more anglicized. English is so prevalent that many Koreans are unaware that their words for "part-time job," *arūbait'ū* ("Arbeit") and "theme," *t'ema* ("Thema") really came from German, not English. But to many of the older generation in the Land of the Morning Calm, this hysteria for *oeraeō* ("foreign words") is seen as dishonorable. "There are kids these days who forget their culture; they prefer hamburgers and bread to kimchi," they sadly note. But even South Korean senior citizens still use the loanwords for *bus* and *taxi*.

### One of the Questions Raised After the Presentation

Q: Which has had more of influence on the Korean language – British English or American English?

A: Definitely American English. The U.S. military has had a presence in Korea since the Korean War and many Koreans regularly watch AFKN, the U.S. military's T.V. station that airs popular American sitcoms. The Korean-to-English (*Han-Yōng*) dictionaries include an appendix showing the differences between British and American usage. Recently, there have been some Korean-to-American English (*Han-Mi*) dictionaries published.

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Korean-to-English transcriptions are based on standard romanization principles by the Korean Ministry of Education.

<sup>2</sup>*Korea* in this paper refers to South Korea, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> Before *hangŭl* was created, Koreans had been using ancient Chinese characters. Chinese-derived words name much of the medical and philosophical terminology in Korean. Although different, Chinese derivatives in Korean may be compared to Greek and Latin roots in English.

<sup>4</sup> These newspaper articles were taken from the Los Angeles edition of the *Hankuk Ilbo*, so the loanword content was significantly high. There are an estimated 1.3 million ethnic Koreans in the United States (Grimes, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> I included proper nouns in the study to demonstrate the versatility of *hangŭlizing* Western names.

### Appendix A

This list shows the results of a study conducted with seven Korean students enrolled in Meridian School ESL classes. Students read loanwords written on flashcards – two times each: once in written English letters and once in Korean *hangŭl*. Rather than comment on the English words, I only point out the “mispronunciations” of the Korean words. The parts in bold record where the students did not pronounce the word in the predicted *hangŭl* pattern.

Word	Predicted <i>hangŭl</i> pronunciation	Mispronunciation
banana	panana	
Burger King Whopper	Pŏgŏ K'ing Wap'ŏ	
bus	pŏsŭ	“ <b>bus</b> ”
CD	ssidi	“ <b>CD</b> ”
computer	k'ŏmp'yut'ŏ	
guitar	kit'a	
ice cream	aisŭk'ŭrim	“ <b>ice k'ŭrim</b> ” “ <b>ice cream</b> ”
lamp	raemp'ŭ	“ <b>lamp'ŭ</b> ”
McDonald's Big Mac	Maekdonaldŭ Pingmaek	
news	nyusŭ	“ <b>news</b> ”
O.K.	ok'ei	
piano	p'iano	
pizza	p'ija	
scarf	sŭk'ap'ŭ	
service	ssŏbisŭ	
shower	shyawo	
slam dunk (dunk shoot)	tŏngk'ŭ shyut	“ <b>dunk shoot</b> ”
superman	shyup'ŏmaen	“ <b>sup'ŏmaen</b> ”
supermarket	shyup'ŏmak'et	
television	t'ellebijŏn	“ <b>t'ellevision</b> ”
toast	t'osŭt'ŭ	“ <b>toast'ŭ</b> ”
wood	udŭ	

- All native Koreans, the students' ages ranged from 14-18, average 15.8.
- Time spent in the U.S. ranged from 10 months to eight (nonconsecutive) years, average two years.
- Three lived with host families, and the rest with their own families. Four of them spoke mostly Korean in the home.



## Appendix B

In an article published in *Shigak*, a journal of art studies, Jo (1997) uses loanwords to discuss an international art exhibit, the Kwangju Biennale. About 5% of the article is loanwords. (The numbers below indicate how many times each loanword appeared.)

commissioner	9	k'ōmisyōnō
group	3	kūrup
image	2	imiji
ante-		ant'i
art		at'ū
Asia		Ashia
belt		pelt'ū
bricolage		pūrik'ollaju
camp		k'aemp'ū
color		kalla
curator		k'yureit'ō
documentary		tak'yument'ōri
documenter		tok'yument'a
Europe		Yurōp
handbill		ppira
mass communication		maesūk'ōm
menu		menyu
New York		Nyuyok
poster		p'osūt'ō
postmodernism		p'osūt'ū modōnijūm
seminar		semina
sketch		sūk'ech'i
sponsor		sūp'onsō
Venice		penisū

Some non-English loanwords are *piennale* (*biennale*, Italian), which appears 23 times, and *nwiangsū* (*nuance*, French).

## Appendix C

An article about the Super Bowl in a Korean newspaper, the *Hankuk Ilbo* (1998), exposes the rampant influence of English on Korean. Two Roman numerals appear in the article, *XVIII* and *XXXII*, and over 35% of the article is loanwords.

Super Bowl	22	Sup'ōboul
Denver Broncos	13	Tenbō Pūrongk'osū
AFC	11	(Abbreviations are printed in roman letters.)
Green Bay Packers	5	Kūrinbei P'aek'ōsū
team	5	t'im
Terrell Davis	4	T'erel Teibisū
NFC	4	
champion	3	ch'aemp'ion
Pittsburgh Steelers	3	P'ich'ūbōgū Sūt'illōsū
tie	3	t'ai
Las Vegas	2	Rasūbegasū
NFL	2	
running back	2	rōningbaek
advantage		ōdūbaent'iji
all		ol
AP		
betting line		pet'ingnain
Buffalo Bills		Pōp'allo Pilsū
conference		k'ōnp'ōrōnsū
Detroit Lions		Tit'ūroit'ū Raionsū
game		keim
home field		homp'ildū
jinx		chingk'ūsū
Kansas City Chiefs		K'aensasūshit'i Ch'ipsū
Minnesota Vikings		Minesot'a Paik'ingsū
Oakland Raiders		Ok'ūllaendū Reidōsū
park		p'ak
playoff		p'ūlleiop'ū
pro		p'ūro
ranking		raengk'ing
running game		rōning-geim
rushing yard		rōshing-yadū
San Diego		Saendiego
Barry Sanders		Paeri Saendōsū
tackle		t'aek'ūl
trophy		t'ūrop'i

Washington Redskins Woshingt'ōn  
Redūsük'insū

### Appendix D

The following lists loanwords from the first two episodes of *Weding Türesü* ("Wedding Dress") (Yi, 1997), a T.V. dramedy.

#### English loanwords:

OK	17	ok'ei
belt	4	pelt'ü
cell phone	4	haendüp'on
		("handphone")
wedding shop	4	weding shyop
apartment	3	ap'at'ü
message	3	meseji
wife	3	waip'ü
honeymoon	2	hönimun
humanism	2	hyumōnijūm
meeting	2	mit'ing
sign	2	sain
taxi	2	t'aekshi
television	2	t'ellebi
towel	2	t'awol
UCLA	2	Yussierei
anyway		eniwei
Berkeley		pök'üllü
boiler		poillō
bus		pösü
business		pijūnisü
café		k'ap'e
coffee		k'öp'i
cup		k'öp
departure		tip'ach'yō
drama		tūrama
dress		türesü
dry		tūrai
fitting		p'it'ing
golf		kolp'ü
level		rebel
meeting		mit'ing
nightclub		nait'ük'üllöp
office		op'isü
open		op'ün
prize		p'üräijü
scarf		sük'ap'ü
sexy		sekshi

shower shyawo  
single shing-gül  
tomato t'omat'o  
visa pija  
wedding dress weding türesü

#### Phrases in English:

"The dialed number is . . ."

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are now sorry to delay our departure to . . ."

"That's OK . . ."

#### Signs in English:

LAVATORIES

EXIT

NO SMOKING

CHARACTER

HANNA WEDDING

Total number of English loanwords: 104

Playing time of two episodes: 120 minutes

An English loanword appears on average: every 1 minute and 12 seconds

### Appendix E

This "Yut'a-esō Sük'i" ("Ski in Utah") advertisement in the *Hankuk Ilbo* (1998) consists of over 30% foreign words.

ski	7	sük'i
Park City	4	(Words without romanized Korean are printed in the ad in English.)
		(sic)
Deervalley	3	
full day	3	
Alta	2	
course	2	k'osü
Olympics	2	Ollimp'ik
pm	2	
stars	2	süt'a
Utah	2	Yut'a
Hilton Hotel		Hilt'ün Hot'el
Hollywood		Höllüüt
powder		p'audō
Salt Lake		Solleik
shopping		syap'ing
skier		sük'iō