

BOOK REVIEWS/SOUTH KOREA

Jieun Kiaer and Hyejeong Ahn, *Emergence of Korean English: How Korea's Dynamic English Is Born*. London: Routledge, 2024. 192 pages, 15 illustrations. Hardcover, €145.00; paperback, €42.99; ebook, €35.99. ISBN 9781032257709 (hardcover), 9781032257716 (paperback), 9781003284956 (ebook).

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Emergence of Korean English: How Korea's Dynamic English Is Born

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Emergence of Korean English: How Korea's Dynamic English Is Born offers a comprehensive examination of the evolution of “Korean English” and its profound influence on South Korea’s society, culture, and identity. It critically challenges prevailing stereotypes, highlighting the pivotal role of Korean English in Korea’s cultural development. Jieun Kiaer and Hyejeong Ahn characterize Korean English as the hybridized language that emerges from the influence and interaction between English and Korean. This hybridization encompasses, but is not limited to, the incorporation of transliterated loanwords and the application of English plural markers to Korean terms, and it holds more positive connotations compared to the term “Konglish.” Furthermore, the book examines Korea’s complex relationship with the English language, exploring the distinctive linguistic features and sociocultural implications of Korean English and its evolution through global fandoms and social media, challenging traditional views on language development. Kiaer and Ahn’s backgrounds are invaluable for a book that examines Korean English. Kiaer’s research on the cultural impacts of *hallyu* (the “Korean Wave”) and Korean-English dynamics offers insights into the global spread of Korean English, while Ahn’s background on multilingual practices and the role of English educationally offers unique insights into how Korean English is shaping and adapting in global and academic environments.

Chapter 1 introduces Korea’s historical interactions with English, which were minimal until the 1950s, when postwar ties with the United States began to shape the language’s societal role, enabling creative and adaptive use. One example of this is the incorporation of English words into Korean grammatical structures, which are now commonplace in spoken Korean. The authors argue that despite its controversial status among language purists,

Korean English serves as an empowering asset. Initially confined to Korea, it has emerged as a global phenomenon that has been shaped by the Korean Wave, digital media, and translingual practices.

Chapter 2 analyzes Korea's cultural and linguistic evolution, focusing on governance, attitudes toward the West, and English integration. During the Chosŏn dynasty, Korea adopted Chinese bureaucratic structures and relied on China and Japan for Western knowledge. With increasing Western influence, treaties were formed with Western powers, and American missionaries helped establish institutions that have since become leading universities in Korea today. After liberation from Japan, the United States emerged as a major influence, and English was introduced as a core subject in Korean education. By the 1960s, English had become Korea's most important foreign language.

Chapter 3 compares the terms “Konglish,” “Korean English,” and “Englishised Korean.” Konglish, considered a more informal way of combining Korean and English, is often debated as to whether it is a legitimate part of Korean linguistic diversity or a “lower-status” variety. Some scholars, particularly linguists and educators, regard Konglish as a practical and culturally significant form of language. However, others with a more prescriptive approach argue that it strays from both Korean and English linguistic conventions, violating the preservation and threatening the continuity of the contemporary Korean language. Korean English, however, is regarded as a more legitimate, developed variety, with numerous studies focusing on its linguistic features and global spread. “Englishised Korean” is a term that more specifically refers to the reception of English words into Korean for domestic communication, including loanwords, hybrid constructions, and global adaptations. While the authors examine the definitions and perceptions of these terms, they argue that these terms exist along a spectrum of linguistic varieties and may be used interchangeably. Moreover, they contend that their increasing prominence in international contexts has contributed to the broader recognition of Korean language and culture.

Chapter 4 reviews the linguistic characteristics of Korean English, focusing on Anglo-Korean affixes used to create new words. It examines phonological and syntactic features and presents frameworks for analyzing Korean English lexicons, including categories like loanwords, hybrid terms, and pseudo loanwords. The chapter explores processes such as creative compounding, affixation, and truncation in word creation. These affixes, listed in detail, are described as reflecting societal changes and online communication's influence, emphasizing the evolving nature of Korean English beyond cultural norms. An example of this is the formation of the term “*noalk'ollo*” (“someone who does not drink alcohol”) through the combination of the English prefix “no-” and the Korean created transliterated term “*alk'ollo*” (“someone who does drink alcohol”). This phrase is particularly noteworthy as it does not conform

to either English or Korean conventions, yet it reflects how English influence on Korean can be used to frame evolving societal attitudes in a culture where alcohol consumption has traditionally carried great significance (78). The authors propose that the use of Korean English enables lexical innovations, which act as vehicles to succinctly and effectively examine various aspects of Korean society.

Chapter 5 examines the pragmatic differences between Korean and English, focusing on address terms and politeness. It discusses how Korean cultural norms with a strong emphasis on hierarchy, humility, and *chǒng* (a sense of togetherness that forms an important part of Korean collective identity) shape Korean English. Korean speakers navigate levels of formality in daily life, which is contrasted with the more egalitarian nature of English. These cultural differences can cause identity clashes for Korean English speakers, who may view English usage as either impolite or liberating. The chapter highlights how these cultural nuances affect relationships and approaches to communication.

Chapter 6 explores the rise of the Korean Wave and its impact on language, particularly within Korean fandom communities. As Korean entertainment, food, and products gain global popularity, fans, who are often active on social media, have created a unique language involving emojis, local language mixing, and Romanized Korean. These practices have led to the inclusion of Korean English terms, particularly food-related, in the Oxford English Dictionary. The chapter highlights several examples with variations in spelling and instances of popularity, as well as the influence of Korean skincare, gestures, and K-pop.

Chapter 7 examines Korea's "English fever," a notion that English proficiency is key to national growth and global integration. It reviews government initiatives from the late 1990s, including the incorporation of English education in primary schools and the recruitment of native English-speaking teachers. The chapter discusses the rise of private English academies and the push for English as a medium of instruction in higher education. This drive has led to significant investments in private education and an increase in Korean students studying abroad. However, this trend has given rise to growing social polarization, referred to as the "English divide," and heightened language anxiety (124). The acquisition of English proficiency and education now serves as a form of social capital, with financial resources playing a significant role in determining access to English education. This has led to an expanding divide between those who can afford English education opportunities, such as studying abroad in English-speaking countries, and those who cannot. This dynamic has contributed to the perception, both individually and societally in Korea, that lower English proficiency

corresponds to lower socioeconomic standing. Consequently, the pressure to attain English proficiency impacts both educational experiences and broader social constructs of identity and success in Korea today.

Chapter 8 highlights the ongoing evolution of English, particularly as it expands globally among second-language speakers. The influence of the internet and social media are noted as significant contributors to this transformation. Additionally, the chapter examines the impact of linguistic cross-fertilization, the Korean Wave, and Konglish, arguing that Korean English, despite its undervaluation, is a valuable social asset for Korea in global engagement.

Overall, *Emergence of Korean English* offers a blend of historical and analytical discussions, which are enriched by modern and practical examples, such as anecdotes and real-world images. While many insights may be familiar to those knowledgeable about Korean culture, the contextualization of English integration from historical to modern times offers a compelling and original perspective. By examining both linguistic and sociocultural aspects of Korean English, the book fosters a broader discussion on English as a global lingua franca and the emergence of new English varieties shaped by diverse communities worldwide.

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