ENGLISH LOANWORDS IN KOREAN: PATTERNS OF BORROWING AND SEMANTIC CHANGE

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During much of this century, the United States and other Western countries have had a tremendous impact on Korea.[1] One very noticeable effect is the changes that have taken place in the Korean language (Lee, 1989)--particularly the adoption of thousands of foreign (mostly English) loanwords. This paper begins by giving a brief history of lexical borrowing in Korean, and then specifically discusses the types and patterns of English borrowing. Finally, the principles of semantic field theory (Kittay, 1987; Lehrer, 1974; Lehrer & Kittay, 1992) are applied to attempt to describe and categorize some of the types of semantic changes that occur--in both the English and Korean words--when English lexical items are borrowed into Korean.

HISTORY OF LEXICAL BORROWING IN KOREAN

Korean has a long history of lexical borrowing. In fact, well over half of all modern Korean vocabulary consists of words either directly borrowed from Chinese or derived from Chinese characters[2] (Park, 1989; Yi, 1975). From 1910 to 1945, Korea was a Japanese colony, and the official language became Japanese. Although the policy in Korea has been to try to eliminate Japanese words since independence in 1945, many Japanese vocabulary items are still in common use (Joh, 1989). Furthermore, since the Japanese were actively importing Western technology and with it many English words during much of this period, this was also the time when some of the earliest loanwords from English began to be introduced into Korean. These words can often be recognized by their distinctive Japanese-style pronunciation; for example, *kopi* 'coffee', *biniru* 'vinyl' (meaning "plastic"), and *tairu* 'tile'. These pronunciations are still used by many older Korean speakers, but younger speakers tend to give them a pronunciation that integrates them into the Korean phonological system; e.g., the above examples are pronounced *kŏpi* (a fortunate change since *kopi* literally means "nose blood"), *binil*, and *tail*, respectively.[3]

The first intensive exposure to American culture and language came with the arrival of American soldiers following World War II. English words such as *ba* 'bar', *resŭtŭrang* 'restaurant', and *teillŏ* tailor' became familiar to Koreans at that time, and must be considered among the earliest English loanwords to enter Korean. Additional contact took place during the Korean War (1950-53) when the latest military technology was introduced as well as the words to describe it--*taengkŭ* 'tank', *roketŭ* 'rocket', and *misail* 'missile' for example (Park, 1983). In fact, Algeo (1960) and Webster (1960) document an English-based pidgin (i.e., "Korean Bamboo English") that developed during this period, which has more or less disappeared, but may have been responsible for adding other English words and expressions to the Korean vocabulary. The United States has maintained a major military presence in Korea since 1945, with tens of thousands of troops presently stationed there.

In addition, the Korean economy has been one of the fastest developing in the world for much of the past thirty years or so, and this, along with the unprecedented rate of modernization that resulted, came about in large part due to a massive infusion of Western technology, mostly from the United States. One of the major reasons for the relatively sudden appearance of thousands of English loanwords in Korean, then, was probably that the words introduced along

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with the new technology and ideas were "so intimately associated with an object or a concept that acceptance of the thing [involved] acceptance also of the word" (Baugh & Cable, 1978:84).

Another reason for the borrowing, no doubt, is the relatively high status and prestige (Allan, 1986:244) of English as a foreign language among Koreans. English has been a required subject in Korean middle and high schools for more than forty years (Lee, 1989:35) and is also a popular subject of study in universities and private *hagwŏn*, or institutes. Also, many Korean students now have the opportunity to study abroad--most of them in the United States--and thus become fluent in English. Finally, Takashi (1990) suggests that one reason English borrowings are common in Japanese is because they seem "to convey a modernity and sophistication about the subject matter under discussion" (p. 330), and it seems likely that that may also be true in Korean--at least in certain domains of borrowing and for certain speakers.

PATTERNS OF ENGLISH LEXICAL BORROWING IN KOREAN

English loanwords are very widespread throughout the Korean lexicon. There seem to be few domains (except perhaps for the most traditional) which do not include some borrowed items which are relatively well-established, frequently used, and integrated phonologically, morphologically, and syntactically into Korean.[4] Also, although there is occasional discussion of the "problem of loanwords" (see Shinn, 1990) by language purists, there seems to be very little practical resistance to the use of English loanwords among Koreans of varying age, sex, occupation, education, and social class. There are, however, certain fields in which examples of English loanwords are very common. The following is a very small sample of some fields that include numerous English borrowings, intended to give a general idea of the breadth and patterns of borrowing.

(1) a. Technology, medicine, engineering, etc.:

enjiniŏ 'engineer'	*bi-ti-a* 'VTR (video tape recorder)'
reijŏ 'laser'	*asŭpŭrin* 'aspirin'
kompyutŏ 'computer'	*penishillin* 'penecillin'
sopŭtŭweŏ 'software'	*pŭllajŭma* 'plasma'

b. Foods and food service:

aisŭkŭrim 'ice cream'	*dijŏtŭ* 'dessert'
haembŏgŏ 'hamburger'	*selpŭ sŏbisŭ* 'self-service'
kolla 'cola'	*kentŏki chikin* 'Kentucky chicken'
keikŭ 'cake'	*resŭtŭrang* 'restaurant'

c. Sports and entertainment:

sŭpochŭ 'sports'	*disŭko* 'disco'
tenisŭ 'tennis'	*pap song* 'pop song'
boulling 'bowling'	*odio* 'audio'
ŏmpaiŏ 'umpire'	*komedi* 'comedy'

d. Clothing and fashion:

tishŏchŭ 'T-shirt'	*paeshŏn* 'fashion'
sŭweto 'sweater'	*meikŏ* 'maker'
sŭkŏtŭ 'skirt'	*heŏsŭtail* 'hairstyle'
paka 'parka'	*maenikyuŏ* 'manicure'

e. Lodging and household furnishings:

apatŭ 'apartment'	*sopa* 'sofa'
billa 'villa'	*teibŭl* 'table'
kondo 'condo'	*kapetŭ* 'carpet'
hotel 'hotel'	*sŭtaendŭ* 'stand (lamp)'

f. Transportation and automobiles:

bŏsŭ 'bus'	*onŏdŭraibŏ* 'owner driver'
tŏminal 'terminal'	*rŏshiawŏ* 'rush hour'
taekshi 'taxi'	*ka eŏkon* 'car air conditioner'
maika 'my car'	*taekshi sŭtaendŭ* 'taxi stand'

One thing that is immediately noticeable about the lists above is that nearly all of the borrowed words are nouns. In fact, the great majority of English loanwords in Korean seem to be nouns.[5] There are, however, also loanwords drawn from other syntactic categories, including verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Also, many words borrowed as nouns can be changed into verbs by adding suffixes such as *-hada* 'do', *-doeda* 'become', or *-chida* 'play'; into adjectives by adding the suffix *-han*; or into adverbs by adding *-hage*. The following are a few examples:

(2)

kŏtŭ-hada 'to cut'	*taipŭ-hada* 'to type'
shoping-hada 'to shop'	*shoking-han* 'shocking'
tenisŭ-chida 'to play tennis'	*pŭreishi-hage* 'freshly'
sŭtŭraikŭ-doeda 'to strike (in baseball)'	

Another characteristic shared by the words listed in (1) above is that most of them are used to refer to objects or ideas introduced into Korean only fairly recently; that is, they may have been borrowed largely in response to a need for new vocabulary. There are many other English loanwords, however, for which lexical need obviously plays little if any role since equivalent (or very similar) Korean words exist, as in the following examples:

(3)

bilding 'building'	*kounŏ* 'corner'
paati 'party'	*rŏning* 'running'
pŭllaen 'plan'	*rŏbŭ retŏ* 'love letter'
riidŏ 'leader'	*sŭtatŭ-hada* 'to start'

In addition, besides the more obvious phonological changes that take place, a few of the words listed in example (1) illustrate two other common processes that sometimes occur and change the form of English lexical items borrowed into Korean: shortening (or truncation) and compounding.

First, it is very common for the final syllable or syllables of a long English word to simply be cut off:

(4)

rimokon 'remote control'	*dipatŭ* 'department store'
demo 'demonstration'	*eŏkon* 'air conditioner'
shupŏ 'supermarket'	*pŏsŭkom* 'personal computer'

Another less common form of shortening is the use of acronyms. Many of these, such as *di-jei* 'D.J.', *ji-ai* 'G.I.', *shi-di* 'C.D. (compact disk)', and *pi-shi* 'P.C. (personal computer)', are used the same as in English. Others, however, are innovative:

(5) *kei-eisŭ* 'K.S. (Korean Standard)'; a quality-control mark
ti-di-shi 'T.D.C. (Tongduchon City)'; site of a military base
em-ti 'M.T. (membership training)'; an overnight student trip

Second, two or more loanwords are sometimes combined to create new lexical items that do not occur in English:

(6) *saellŏrimaen* 'salary + man'; businessman
opisŭgŏl 'office + girl'; female office worker

sho pŭrogŭraem 'show + program'; TV variety show
rijotel 'resort + hotel'; resort hotel
gorin 'goal + in'; a successful shot in basketball

Another form of compounding involves combining English loanwords with Korean words:

(7) *tenisŭ-jang* 'tennis *jang* (=court)'
maika-sidae 'my car *sidae* (=generation, age)'
gosok-bŏsŭ tŏminal '*gosok* (=highway) bus terminal'

SEMANTIC CHANGES

Changes in English Loanwords

Many English words are borrowed into Korean with little or no change in meaning. Not surprisingly, this is particularly true of names for concrete objects, such as *bŏsŭ* 'bus', *misail* 'missile', or *radio* 'radio'. However, there are many examples of loanwords that undergo semantic narrowing (or restriction), semantic widening (or extension), and semantic transfer (or shift). A few examples are listed in (8).

(8) a. Semantic narrowing:

Loanword	Restricted Meaning
paenchŭ 'pants'	underwear
miting 'meeting'	blind date
autŭ 'out'	baseball term only
teipŭ 'tape'	recording tape

b. Semantic widening:

Loanword	Extended Meaning
aisŭkŭrim 'ice cream'	any frozen dessert or snack
sŏbisŭ 'service'	anything offered free of charge
wain 'wine'	any alcoholic beverage

c. Semantic transfer:

Loanword	Shifted Meaning
bŭrusŭ 'blues'	slow dance
taellŏntŭ 'talent'	TV actor
kŏning 'cunning'	cheating on an examination
kentŏki 'Kentucky'	fried chicken
maenshŏn 'mansion'	apartment
maenikyuŏ 'manicure'	fingernail polish

Changes in Korean Words

Semantic field theory claims that the meanings of individual words cannot be studied in isolation (Kittay, 1987). Instead, because "the lexicon is a network of relationships" (Lehrer, 1974:18), the meanings of words must be studied "in relation to other words that articulate a given content domain and that stand in the relation of affinity and contrast to the word(s) in question" (Kittay & Lehrer, 1992:3-4). One of the implications of semantic field theory, then, is that the introduction of a new item such as a loanword into a semantic field should influence the meanings of other words in that field. This section of the paper attempts to describe some of the types of semantic changes that have occurred (or are still occurring) in Korean words because of the introduction of English loanwords.

First, there do appear to be some English loanwords in Korean that were borrowed to fill a lexical gap created by the intro-duction of a new object or idea that have had little or no effect on the meanings of related Korean words. The items listed in (9), perhaps, add to the number of

words in their respective lexical fields without actually changing the meanings of any of the Korean words in those fields. There simply are no Korean words or Sino-Korean constructions[6] that are commonly used in their place.

(9)

tellebi 'television'	*bolpen* 'ball(point) pen'
golpŭ 'golf'	*saendŭwichi* 'sandwich'
ggasŭ 'gas'	*haihil* 'high heel'
taiŏ 'tire'	*ripsŭtik* 'lipstick'
pijapai 'pizza pie'	*pama* 'permanent (wave)'

Most English loanwords, however, seem to have Korean synonyms, or at least words with approximately similar meanings, as shown in (10). As predicted by semantic field theory, there are several different types of semantic changes that seem to be directly attributable to the appearance of Western concepts and English loanwords. These seem to fall into at least four broad categories (represented by the items in 10a, 10b, 10c, and 10d) in terms of the types of influence the loanwords have had (or are having) on Korean words in their lexical fields.

(10)

	Loanword	Korean Synonym
a.	*kapetŭ* 'carpet'	*yangtanja*
	renji 'range'	*hwaro*
	tenisŭ 'tennis'	*jŏnggu*
	aelbŏm 'album'	*sajinchŏp*
b.	*dipatŭ* 'department (store)'	*baekhwajŏm*
	taipŭraitŏ 'typewriter'	*tajagi*
	buchŭ 'boots'	*janghwa*
	meikŏp 'make-up'	*hwajang*
c.	*taellŏntŭ* 'talent (=actor)'	*baeu*
	pŭrenchipŭrai 'French fries'	*gamjatwigim*
	sŭpochŭ 'sports'	*undong*
	kompyutŏ 'computer'	*jŏnsangi*
d.	*sŭkŏtŭ* 'skirt'	*chima*
	kuki 'cookie'	*gwaja*
	hotel 'hotel'	*yŏgwan*
	misŭtŏ 'mister'	*sŏnsaengnim, ssi, etc.*

First, the Korean words listed in (10a) seem to have been all but replaced by their loanword counterparts. The Korean words, if used at all, are now used mainly by older speakers, in reference to old-fashioned objects or ideas, or in very formal--and usually written--contexts. On the other hand, in the judgement of one native Korean speaker at least, the Korean words in (10b) seem to be used in about equal distribution with the loanwords and with almost exactly the same meaning. *Baekhwajŏm* 'department store', for example, sounds no more or less appropriate to most Korean speakers than *dipatŭ* 'department store', and both appear in print. However, many of the loanwords in this category seem to be more commonly used by younger speakers, and thus may eventually become members of the former category.

Other Korean lexical items appear to have been affected in other ways by the introduction of English borrowings, but do not seem to be in any danger of being totally replaced by them. The Korean words in (10c) seem to have become narrower in meaning than they once were; that is, the loanwords have taken over some part of the meaning formerly covered entirely by one Korean word. For example, *baeu* 'actor' is no longer used to refer to a TV actor; *taellŏntŭ* 'talent' is used instead. *Gamjatwigim* refers to all types of fried potatoes, except those in the shape of

American-style *pŭrenchipŭrai* 'French fries'. And *jŏnsangi*, a Sino-Korean construction originally denoting any type of "computing machine," now usually means "calculator"; "computer" is *kompyutŏ*. Finally, the items in (10d) are examples of another phenomenon in Korean semantics. The meanings of the Korean words have become restricted to things of traditional Korean origin or design (even though some of the words seem to have been applied more generally when the objects were initially introduced). A *chima* is a traditional Korean-style "skirt," while *sŭkŏtŭ* refers only to a modern, Western-style "skirt," for example, and *yŏgwan* refers only to a Korean-style "inn," never a modern, Western-style "hotel." There seem to be many examples of this type of duality in the domains of clothing and food, but it also appears in other domains. A subclass of this category may include borrowed terms of address, such as *misŭtŏ* 'mister' and *misŭ* 'miss'. These are often used as socially-neutral titles in business and in situations where the relative social status of the participants is unclear. In other contexts, however, Korean terms of address which indicate social or kinship relationships are much more likely to be used.

Before concluding this section, there are two additional observations worth noting. First, it should be pointed out that there are examples of English loanwords that were once widely used in Korean but have more recently been replaced by other lexical items. Martin's (1954) textbook, for instance, lists *ppiru* (obviously borrowed through Japanese) as the Korean word for "beer," but this has since been replaced by the Sino-Korean construction *maekju* 'beer'. Also, it seems important to mention that nearly all of the Korean words listed in (10) are in fact Sino-Korean constructions and, in many cases, have a relatively short history of usage in Korean themselves (e.g., *tajagi* 'typewriter') or perhaps underwent fairly recent extension to include newly-introduced objects or concepts in their meanings. It is likely that further investigation would verify that these words are more easily replaced (or displaced) by the introduction of loanwords than are original Korean words.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Clearly, English loanwords, as well as exposure to English and Western culture in general, have had a major effect on the Korean language. Unfortunately, little has been published in this area. This paper began with an overview of the history, sociolinguistic environment, and general patterns of English lexical borrowing in Korean, based to some extent on casual observation and conjecture. There are many interesting and important questions that this paper could not even begin to touch upon. More focused, experimental studies, for instance, could look at the influence of sociolinguistic factors such as age, sex, level of education, occupation, social class, register, and area of residence on variation in the use of English loanwords and their Korean counterparts. Such studies, aside from their theoretical value, would have important pedagogical and even political implications--especially considering the widening gap between language use and vocabulary in North and South Korea (Kumatani, 1990; Lee, 1990).

The final section of the paper has taken a brief look at some of the semantic changes that take place when an English loanword enters Korean. As might be expected, the meanings of the English words are often narrowed, widened, or shifted to related objects or concepts. As predicted by semantic field theory, the meanings of Korean words are also altered by the addition of the new words. Most loanwords are nouns, and this paper has dealt mainly with changes that occur in Korean synonyms and other closely related words. Sometimes these are new words for new objects or ideas that simply add to an existing field, or sometimes a loanword and a Korean synonym appear to continue to be used concurrently, for a period of time at least. Often, however, the changes are more drastic: Korean words are sometimes totally replaced by loanwords or become restricted to formal or written usage. Other times, loanwords take over a part of the sense of a related Korean word, and the two words become hyponyms--as in the case of *hotel* 'Western-style hotel' and *yŏgwan* 'Korean-style inn'--or a superordinate-subordinate relationship develops--as when *pŭrenchipŭrai* 'French fries' becomes one type of *gamjatwigim* 'fried potatoes'.

Further research would no doubt shed light on variation in the current usage of English loanwords and their Korean counterparts, as well as lead to a better understanding of the patterns of semantic change that take place over time. A further analysis should examine borrowings other than nouns more closely. How do English verbs (e.g., *sŭtatŭ-hada* 'start'), adjectives (e.g., *shoking-han* 'shocking'), and adverbs (e.g., *pŭreshi-hage* 'freshly') affect the existing synonymous, hyponymous, and antonymous relationships in the fields they are added to? And what, if any, are the effects across syntactic categories?

This analysis suggests that the situation in Korean, in which there has recently been a massive influx of various types of borrowed lexical items from an historically unrelated language, provides an extremely rich opportunity for semantic research--in particular, perhaps, from the point of view of semantic field relations. Further studies could look more closely at specific kinds of semantic relationships, various semantic relationships in specific domains, or at individual lexical items and how they affect or are affected by related words.

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NOTES

[1]It should be noted that the Korean Peninsula has been divided into North and South Korea since 1945, and the language has developed in very different ways in the two countries (Clarke, 1982; Lee, 1990). The communist government of North Korea officially prohibits the use of foreign loanwords (Kumatani, 1990). In this paper, *Korea* is used to refer to South Korea, and *Korean* refers to the dialect spoken in and around the capital city of Seoul.

[2]For an historical description of how this came about, see Gaur (1992), Lukoff (1982), Park (1989), or Yi (1975).

[3]In the interest of readability, I have used a slightly revised version of the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system. Consonants are pronounced roughly as in English, except that *ch*, *k*, *p*, and *t* are more strongly aspirated, and *r* is flapped. Vowels are pronounced approximately as follows: *a* /a/, *e* /e/, *i* /i/, *o* /o/, *u* /u/, *ae* /æ/, *ŏ* /ə/, and *ŭ* /ɨ/. There is no word stress system in Korean.

[4]For a detailed description of the problems involved in deciding when a lexical item from one language should be considered a loanword in another, see Poplack & Sankoff (1984) or Poplack, Sankoff, & Miller (1988). For the purposes of this paper, I have used three bilingual dictionaries (see references), my own observations based on residence in Korea from 1982 to 1989, and the judgements of several native Korean speakers to determine whether or not a particular item is a "loanword."

[5]This agrees with the findings of Morrow (1987) and Takashi (1990) concerning English loanwords in Japanese, Poplack & Sankoff (1984) in Puerto Rican Spanish, and Poplack, Sankoff, & Miller (1988) in Canadian French.

[6]Sino-Korean constructions are Korean words derived by combining two or more Chinese characters. These new words may or may not be the same as Chinese and/or Japanese words, but the pronunciation is distinctly Korean. The demand for new Korean words was met almost exclusively through this process for centuries, and it is still very productive (Yi, 1975).

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