

Old Norse into English into American English into Korean: Some remarkable connections between modern Danish and Korean*

Robert Zola Christensen**

A first glance Korean and Danish seem to be seemingly far apart each other in every linguistic aspect, from the grammar over pronunciation to the written language, not to mention the elaborated polite-conjugations we find in Korean compared to the Danes' habit of saying 'you' ('du') to just about everyone. However, both languages have, from the latter half of the 20th century to nowadays, received an enormous amount of loan words from English-American. If we look in to that, going all the way back to the Viking era in Scandinavia, when it was the Vikings lending out to the English (*knife, guest, gift*), we even find some rare and astonishing connections between Korean and Danish. In this article we go on a walk about Seoul in South Korea, exploiting the city a *as linguistic space*, looking at stores, shops, cafés, billboards, signs, and more on, chasing Old

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** Professor, Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Korea. Associate professor, Språk och Literaturcentrum, Lund University, Sweden

Norse that has made it all the way from the Viking age, over England and USA to Asia and Korea.

Key Words: Konglish, Old Norse, Danish, Language history, word loans, city scape, linguistic space

Since fall 2020, I have lived and worked in Seoul, teaching at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. From the very beginning it stroked me to which extend Korean and Danish are different. The two languages are seemingly far apart in every linguistic aspect, from the grammar over pronunciation to the written language, not to mention the elaborated polite-conjugations we find in Korean compared to the Danes' habit of saying 'you' ('du') to just about everyone.

However, little by little, I realized, that there were some resemblances when it comes to the vocabulary, and a closer look told me we even might find some rare and astonishing connections. To uncover them, we have to go all the way back to the Viking era in Scandinavia and subsequently examine the enormous amount of loan words Korean have received from English-American in recent times, especially from the latter half of the 20th century to nowadays.

Loan words from English in Korean

Let's start, in a phenomenological, active, and performative approach (Koopman 2015), by exploring Korean public space *as linguistic space*. Just outside the campus of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies you will find a lot of stores, shops, cafés, and restaurants. For example, this building:



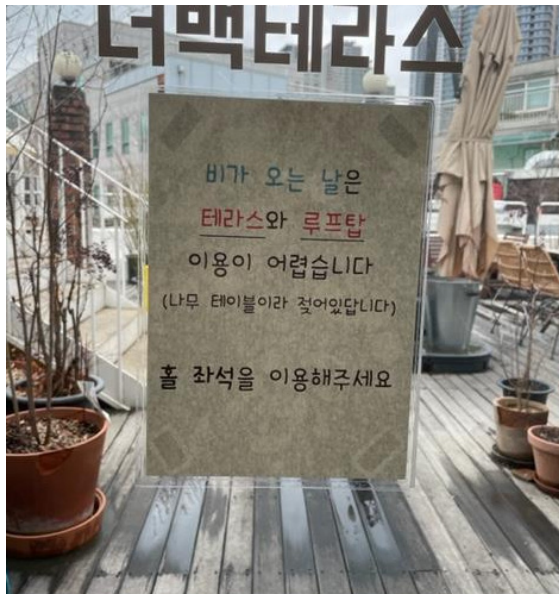
Downstairs, we apparently find a photo shop using the English word ‘photo’ in its name instead of the Korean 사진 [sanjin]. Located upstairs, there is a café that serves all kinds of sweet beverages that my students are so fond of: Milkshake, smoothie, Coca-Cola, blueberry juice, orange juice, and mango juice. We have all those English words in Korean as well, written in Hangeul, and pronounced very differently to standard English, but never the less: 밀크쉐이크 [milkeu sweikeu], 스무디 [smodi], 코카콜라 [kokakola], 블루베리주스 [bluberi juse], 오렌지 주스 [oranti juse], 망고 주스 [mango juse], 파인애플 주스 [painaepul juse].

There is also a barista (바리스타 [bariseta]) behind the desk, ready to take your coffee and tea order, and you will find a lot of English on menu (메뉴, [menju]): Americano 아메리카노 [amaerikano], iced latte 아이스라떼 [aiseladae], bubble tea (버블티 bobulti) and more.

In case, you have a sweet tooth you can ask for both cake (케이크, [keikeu]), and cookie (쿠키 [koki]), and why not ice cream? (아이스크림 [aiskrem]).

A lot of these so called ‘Konglish’ words are not only very different in terms of pronunciation; they may also differ semantically. The meaning, which these words cover, often overlap to some extent, but not entirely. For example, the couple you see on the first floor in the picture above enjoying each other’s company, is on a date, and you might hear the expression 데이트 [daite], but quite often the word 미팅 [meeting] is used.

If you go all the way up to the third floor, you can, in case it is not raining, eat your treat on a terrace or further up on a rooftop. A note is sat up writing terrace and rooftop in Konglish (in red).



If you want to eat your food elsewhere, you don’t say “to go”, as Americans tend to do nowadays, but instead you use the expression “take out”. The picture below is from Macdonald’s just next door:



A Korean way to say this is often 포장, but it seems as if the English form is becoming predominant, especially in big cities like Seoul and Busan.

There is also a local table tennis club nearby which I have joined to meet native Koreans. When I play, and I succeed in hitting the ball just right, my opponent might cry out loud:

나이스! [naiseu] for nice, meaning well played! When we, on the other hand, miss an easy ball, we do not only say 아니! [a-ni] but quite often also 노! [nou]! However, you cannot always tell the difference between 아니! and 노! if the game is tense. For a comforting cheer up, 파이팅[fighting] is used.

Before we move on, it is important to stress that Konglish in this article is not used as an overall term for broken, misunderstood, or bad English, as we sometimes see it described among scholars (e. g. Lawrence 2012; Hadikin, 2014). Often used examples are “window shopping” that has turned in to 아이쇼핑 (aisyoping), and service 서비스 which in Korean means on the house/free of charge, sometimes even romanized as ‘seobiseu’.

But there is also a creative element to it, and Konglish should be seen as

a specific kind of English which evolves a rich variation of language which precisely suits Koreans' unique linguistic, cultural and social needs (e.g., Kim 2012; Park 2021). So, let us just define Konglish in a neutral way as: "...the English which is spoken and written by native speakers of Korean" (Kosofsky 1986).

Danglish and Konglish

Danish, like Korean, has been infused by English since the beginning of the 20th century. Before the Second World War, the loan words mainly came from British English, and there was a clear tendency to adjust and modify the words, in terms of conjugation, syntax, orthography, and pronunciation, to make them fit into the Danish language system. This has affected words like 'strejke' (strike), 'flere job' (more jobs), 'trendig' (trendy), 'klub' (club), 'baren' (the bar). The adaption has made the words Danish, and Danish language users do no longer experience them as foreign language features (Christensen 2016).

In recent times, the loans primarily come from the USA, and the Danes tend to let the new vocabulary slide into their language without a whole lot of adaption, for example 'Podcast', 'take', 'browse'. Therefore, Danish American-English is much more American-English than Korean. For starters, Danish and English share the Latin Alphabet in the written language, where Korean use Hangul.

The reason why both Korea and Denmark import so many words from Anglo-American is of course due to our cultural orientation and the prestige we relate to everything that is American. In other words, most loans take place in domains we consider to be cool and modern: Social media, streaming, technical innovations, fancy food and sports, and more.

English	Danish	Korean
mail	mail	메일 mail
air condition	aircondition	에어컨 eeokeon
dot com	dot com	닷컴tat kaem
internet	internet	인터넷 inteonet
scanner	scanner	스캐너 seukaenea
computer	computer	컴퓨터 keompyuteo
printer	printer	프린터 perintae
elevator	elevator	엘리베이터 ellibeiteo
memo	memo	메모 maemo
tv	tv	티비 tibi
radio	radio	라디오 ladio
game	game	게임 geim
action	action	액션 aegsyeon
comedy	komedie	코미디 komidi
thriller	thriller	스릴러 seullilleo
team	team	팀 tem
news	news	뉴스 nyuseu
interviews	interviews	인터뷰 inteobyu
club	club	클럽 keulleob
tennis	tennis	테니스 teniseu
golf	golf	골프 golfeu
hotel	hotel	호텔 hotel
shopping	shopping	쇼핑syoping
burger	burger	햄버거 haembeogeo

Korean and Danish both differ in the English pronunciation. As previously stated, today's Danish less than earlier. Korean diverge more than Danish due the fixed alternation between vowel and consonant in each syllable block, and

in general because Korean belongs to an entirely different language stem, than Danish, which after all has the same Germanic roots as English. Take the English word for “spring”, which has found its way into Korean: 스프링. The Starbucks in our neighborhood has this campaign going for their new coffee blend:



And typically, as in the case of Starbucks and in this article in general, it is via different kinds of advertising in the city scape, and in our surroundings that we get bombarded with the English-American glossary. But not only: Nowadays, and especially after the COVID-pandemic 2019-2022, most Korean order online instead of attending shops and stores. Also here, we meet a lot of English, and even with Romanized letters, like below from one of the most attended online malls, SSG, in Korea.

An advertisement for Lamer NEW Triage treatment. On the left, there is a close-up image of a green glass bottle of the product, surrounded by ice cubes and water droplets, suggesting freshness and hydration. On the right, there is a light blue background with white text. The text reads: '라 메르 NEW 트리트먼트' (Lamer NEW Triage treatment), '새롭게 리뉴얼된 NEW 어드밴스드 트리트먼트 라인입니다.' (This is the newly renewed NEW advanced treatment line.), '수분 에너지로 자오르는 탄력 있는 피부를 완성시킬 한 방울의 힘을 경험해보세요.' (Experience the power of one drop to complete hydrated, elastic skin with moisture energy.).

라 메르 NEW 트리트먼트

새롭게 리뉴얼된 NEW 어드밴스드 트리트먼트 라인입니다.
수분 에너지로 자오르는 탄력 있는 피부를 완성시킬
한 방울의 힘을 경험해보세요.

Also, in the film and media industry, as mentioned earlier, Koreans meet a lot of / an increasing amount of English. Most people watch Netflix, 넷플릭스, [nespeulligseu], and if you go to the Lotte tower (타워[toewae] you can watch Batman (배트맨 [baeteumaen] or another action (액션 [aegsyeon] movie. And you will presumably buy popcorn, 팝콘 [pabkon].

In academia and educational contexts

English has not only become the most important language at a global level. In my field, the academic world, it is about to develop into more or less the lingua franca in various contexts. At Hankuk University of Foreign studies many courses are held only in English. A change we also see in Denmark and elsewhere. In general, many English words concerning education are sliding in to Korean: 파워 포인트 [pawo pointeu], 화이트보드 [waiteboerteu], 워드 [voede], 프레젠테이션 [presjenteisjen], 테스트 [tесеuteu], 모노그래프 [monogulaepeu].

Cultural and historical loan

Before we continue our chase for Danish words in every day Korean: Korea has also a few expressions that derives from what I would call a specific Danish-Scandinavian cultural and historical context, and which are put at play whenever the words are being used. Let me give two examples from two very different settings. Down town Seoul, near City Hall, there is a gym called ‘Tor’, and it has a Viking helmet in its logo. Using the name ‘Tor’ connotes the qualities we associate with the strong and bold Viking god Thor of the North.



The most known Danish person outside of Denmark H. C. Andersen (1805-1875) wrote a lot of fairy tales in his time. One of them, “The ugly Duckling”, is about the gawky little bird that turns in to a swan. The fairytale, as a symbol of the spurned outsider whose virtues are ignored by the world, but finally blossoms and gains respect, has been translated in to many languages, also Korean, and the phrase 미운 오리 새끼 [miun ori saekki] is nowadays a part of the Korean tongue.

Japanese and German

The ‘anglification’ of both Korean and Danish, that we have witnessed in recent times, seems to be something that is actively chosen and is associated with positive cultural interaction, and is in general something we associate with everything that is invigorating and positive. Koreans seem to love “Bateman” and has kind of accepted the “soft imperialism” of the American

way of life. Also, when we at the university use the word 컨퍼런스 for conference, instead of 회의, it just sounds more modern and up to date.

But, where Denmark and Korea are accommodating English, both modern Danes and Koreans tend to retain a certain animosity towards other languages. We have a parallel historical background languages wise. In Denmark's case, exemplified with the neighboring language German and in Korea's case, it is the neighboring language Japanese, although both Korea and Denmark for historical reasons have been influenced immensely by the two languages. During the Second World War, Denmark was occupied by Germany, from 1940 to 1945, while Korea was occupied by Japan between 1910 and 1945. In general, the use of violence and oppression does not endear people to adopt certain cultural practices and language (McPhail S. 2017).

There is also a good reason, why the English impact became so massive after the second world war in Korea. After the surrender of the Japanese Empire, Korea was divided into two countries: North Korea, protected by the Soviets, and South Korea, protected by the United States, which also established a temporal government. Under these circumstances, Koreans had no other choice but to improve their English skills since it was used to communicate with the U.S. army (Park 2009).

At the same time South Korean economy began to develop rapidly motivated by international trade and the technological boom. This process of modernization also caused a massive number of new words coming from the English language which were integrated into the Korean culture during the 60s and 70s, and until the present day. The isolated North Korea, on the other hand, has not undergone the same change, so if you encounter a person from the North in Seoul it can immediately be detected, due to the absence of a Konglish glossary, although the two variants of Korean are essentially the same language

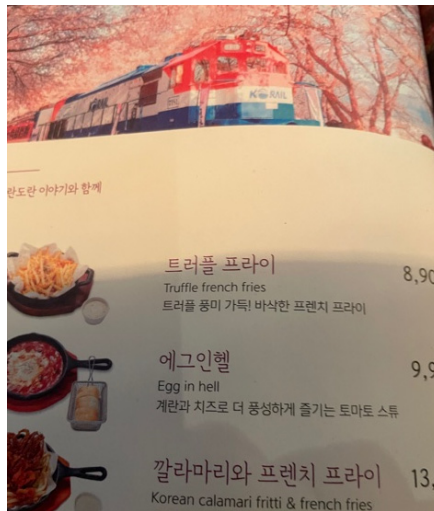
Old Norse into English into American into Korean

As stated earlier, like Korea, Danish has been infused with American-English, but way back, during the Viking Age (793-1066 CE) the exchange happened the other way around. Vikings set sail and went to England where they raided and plundered. Not only did they bring fear and death, but they also brought their language that was slowly but surely rooted. Especially after they at some point decided to settle instead of just practicing seasonal work. Therefore, many English words are loan words from Old Norse, including *egg*, *knife*, *guest*, *gift*, *trust*, *anger*, *steak*, *craw*, *cake*, *clip*, *window*, *husband*, and many, many more. The word *dale* meaning ‘valley’ is still common in surnames like *Dunderdale* and *Martindale* so people in England are also literary walking their Nordic heritage around today.

Now, later on in history, the English went to America to conquer new land, and in their turn, they also brought their language and transmitted it to their new surroundings. Hence, a lot of words originally from Scandinavia were now brought along with them to the USA. This took place during the early 17th century, followed by further migrations and colonization in the 18th and 19th centuries. And it does not stop here. For the last hundred years or so English-American has moved on an infused Asia and Korea.

Accordingly, the question arises: Has any vocabulary from Old Norse made it all the way from the Viking age, over England, and USA and out here to Korea? A long journey in time and geography. The answer is yes. This is maybe surprising because most of the language Korea has imported from English-American is of a newer date, concerns our modern life.

Before I reveal the words, I have found, let me take you to my favorite local restaurant in Seoul. Here they serve a very spicy dish called “Egg in Hell”. Two words from Old Norse, written in Hangul.



You might argue that this example only reflects, as seen above, how English text appears on posters, storefronts, billboards, street signs, warning signs, menus, and many other forms of publicly visible written texts to serve a commercial (and decorative) purpose (Tan and Tan 2015, Chesnut and Curran 2020).

However, we do find three words, which must be defined as Old Norse, that are fully integrated and are in circulation among Koreans in their everyday life. One of them is cake, 케이크 keikeu, that we encounter in every Germanic language. I hear this word almost every day at cafes and when I go to the bakery.

And surprise! We discover the word Viking itself, (바이킹, [baying]).

So, although the Vikings did not make it all the way to Asia, the word for traveling Norsemen actually did. And that is not all. It was the Norwegians, who lived in the most harsh end elongated landscape in Scandinavia, that invented skiing during the Viking Era. In Korean skiing is called exactly that: 스키[seuki]. There is one more word from the Viking Age, actually. The

Viking did not only go west, travellers from mainly Sweden who crossed the Baltic Sea and descended across Eastern Europe were named “Rus”— possibly derived from “ruotsi,” a Finnish word for “a crew of oarsmen” and this is in fact the word from which Russia has received its name. And we find the same name in Korea: 러시아 [leosia].

Now, the Viking-words above is probably not directly imported from Scandinavia, but has most likely gone through English-American, as is often the case. Pizza and croissants are respectively Italian and French but have found their way to Korean via English-American: 피자 [pija], 크로와상 [keurowasang].

So, even though our two languages are very different in most aspects there seem to be some fine threads between Korean and Danish, dating back to the times when Danes were Vikings.

Now, let’s round our public space as linguistic space off with an English, Danish and Korean mishmash, you encounter at one of the most beautiful places in Seoul. The mountain Nam san and its landmark Seoul Tower. Of course, you find the unavoidable Starbucks but also the most Danish of the Danish: sausages from Steff Houlberg, served in bread which gives it the English name hotdog, an early British loan. Here written in English, Danish and Hangul:



Besides the classics and original, you can, as shown on the picture, get a Korean adoption, hotdog with bulgogi (stir-fried marinated beef). It is, in a sense, Konglish, turned into real life. And, wait a minute: Together with 26 other words from Korean ‘Bulgogi’ was added in the edition of The Oxford Dictionary in 2021. In addition to food terms, the reference book has also added words related to Korean pop culture such as ‘manhwa’ as the “Korean genre of cartoons and comic books”; ‘mukbang’ as a video featuring a person eating a large quantity of food and talking to the audience, and, not surprisingly, we find “oppa”, we all know from the song “Oppa gangnam style”. A word typically used by a girl or woman to refer to an older brother, older male friend, or romantic attractive partner. These words show how Korea invent and exchange words within their own local contexts, and then, like Danish in the Viking era, is able to introduce them to the rest of the English-speaking world. Korean is today, where the world is riding of a Korean wave, actually beginning to spread outside its own border and in to English and Danish.



The Oscar winning film “Druk” from 2021. In English it got the title “Another Round” and that became also the title in Korean.



A sandwich 샌드위치, saendeuwichi, in Korean, containing Cheese, 치즈, chijeu, mustard 머스타드, meoseutadeu, ham, 햄 haem and salad, 샐러드, saelleodeu

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<국문요약>

**고대 노르드어에서 영국영어로, 그리고
미국영어로, 그리고 한국어로**
덴마크어와 한국어 간 몇 가지 주목할 만한 연결고리

Robert Zola Christensen

한국어와 덴마크어는 언뜻 보기에는 서로 비슷한 점이 하나도 없는 것처럼 보인다. 언어학적인 측면에서 살펴봤을 때 발음과 문법에서부터 작문에 이르기까지는 말할 것도 없고, 덴마크에서는 상대방을 부를 때 ‘당신’이라고 말하는 것에 비하여 한국에서는 공손하게 존댓말로 말하는 것까지 모든 면에서 서로 많이 다른 언어인 것처럼 보인다. 그러나 이 두 언어는 모두 20세기 후반부터 오늘날까지 영미권으로부터 많은 양의 외래어를 받아들였다.

바이킹들의 단어(knife, guest, gift 등)를 영어로 빌려준 스칸디나비아의 바이킹 시대로 거슬러 올라가 살펴보면 한국어와 덴마크어 사이에 희귀하고 놀라운 연관성을 발견할 수 있다. 이 글에서 우리는 대한민국의 서울을 언어학적인 공간으로 이용하면서 상점, 가게, 카페, 간판, 광고판 등을 살펴보고 바이킹 시대부터 영국, 미국을 넘어 아시아, 한국까지 이르는 고대 스칸디나비아어를 찾아본다.

주제어: 콩글리쉬, 고대 노르드어, 덴마크어, 언어사, 외래어, 도시경관, 언어적 공간

성명: 로베르트 졸라 크리스텐센(Robert Zola Christensen)
소속: 한국외국어대학교 스칸디나비아어과
E-mail: robert@rzc.dk

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