

Title: Exploring the Influence of the English language in Korean Popular Music

Authors: Haerim Oh, Jimin Park

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Eric Friginal, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics and ESL

Introduction

Musical trends in Korea have significantly expanded over the last 30 years as the music and entertainment industry opened up to a variety of international connections and opportunities. Popular music has skewed from traditional Korean genres to recent trends that mirror western pop, rock, and hip-hop. Consequently, the prominent Korean Wave, known as *Hallyu* has also greatly increased in popularity in other countries since the late 1990s. *Hallyu* has paved the way for the Korean music industry to become the global phenomenon it is today, characterized by multiple cultural influences, particularly from the United States. How then has the English language influenced the Korean music scene from 1990 to the present?

Methods

For this study, we have collected data composed of song lyrics from a Korean website, melon.com. The site compiles popular songs in South Korea from 1955 onwards. Our exploratory corpus of lyrics is coded for popularity (i.e., songs considered as hits), genres, artists, and time categories (e.g., representing different years in gaps of 5 years: 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2010). We explored linguistic patterns in the corpus using a concordancer (AntConc) to analyze word lists and identify the distributions and occurrences of English words. We also conducted related qualitative analysis to interpret how linguistic patterns are utilized to market Korean music to a wider audience. We hypothesized that the use of English has gradually increased in Korean music in the past 25 years.

Results

Our results, which will be presented through the medium of a conference poster, shows trending patterns of English words as they appear in Korean popular music. Word categories such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives (including other parts of speech data) are shown to have been popularly used in more recent, radio-based songs compared to data from the 1990s or early 2000s. There is a clear trajectory of how Korean artists focus on international markets as they release ephemeral materials such as music videos and promotional posters.

Conclusions and Discussions

The English language has clearly influenced the music culture of Korea. There is a consistent increase in all factors and domains of the Korean music scene in the use and

presence of English words as reflected in song lyrics across genres. In our poster, we explore reasons as to the increase of English words in the last 25 years, what ratio proportions they are in in comparison to Korean words, and how they are interpreted by listeners. We are interested in future studies and related cultural and global implications of our data and observations.