IMPROVING KOREAN LOANWORD TRANSCRIPTION SKILLS THROUGH LEARNING THE KOREAN ROMANIZATION SYSTEM FOR THAI LEARNERS

In Hyuk Suh

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand

E-Mail: in.su@ssru.ac.th

ABSTRACT

Abstract—Korean loanword transcription poses challenges for Thai learners when they rely on Roman letters, because Korean and Thai employ different Romanization conventions that can cue different consonant categories. This study examined whether learning the Korean Romanization system improves Thai learners' ability to transcribe English-origin loanwords into Hangul, with particular attention to the choice of initial stop consonants. Nineteen Thai learners who completed a 60-hour Korean 1A course participated in a one-week study. Participants completed a Google Survey task involving ten English words and were evaluated only on the correctness of the initial consonant, categorized as correct (aspirated) or incorrect (tense or lax). Group A received Romanization-rule instruction prior to transcription, while Group B first attempted transcription using prior knowledge and then repeated the task after receiving the same instruction. Results showed that instruction improved performance, but the highest accuracy emerged when learners attempted the task first and received instruction afterward: accuracy increased from 72.9% (prior-knowledge attempt) to 87.1% after instruction, compared with 79.2% when instruction was provided before the first attempt. The findings suggest that a "try-first, then teach" sequence may enhance the effectiveness of Romanization-based instruction for Korean loanword transcription among Thai learners.

Keywords— Korean loanword teaching, Korean Romanization System, Royal Thai General System of Transcription

INTRODUCTION

Loanwords borrowed from English are widely used throughout the world. Because these loanwords originate from the same English pronunciations regardless of country, foreign language learners often find them easier to learn than native vocabulary of the target language. However, even when words derive from the same English pronunciation, their meanings may differ across countries. For example, the word "condo," derived from the English "condominium," refers in Korean to a membership-based accommodation facility at a resort where cooking is possible, whereas in Thai it refers to an apartment building in which individuals own individual units within the building. Thus, the meanings of the same loanword can differ by country.

In addition, pronunciation differences also arise across languages. In Korean, the word "콘도" is pronounced with both "o" vowels realized as the same vowel /o/. In contrast, in Thai is pronounced with the first "o" realized as the vowel /ɔ/ and the second "o" as the vowel /o/, showing a clear phonetic distinction.

First, this study examines the Romanization systems of Korean and Thai. According to the Revised Romanization of Korean (RRK) and the Royal Thai General System of Transcription (RTGS), the following consonants are represented in Roman letters as shown below.

	[k']	[k]	[t']	[t]	[p']	[p]
Korean	ㄲ = kk	ㅋ = k	ㄸ = dd	ㅌ = t	ㅃ = bb	ㅍ = p
Thai	ก = k	ข ค = kh	ต = t	ท ฐ = th	ป = p	พ = ph

Previous research has demonstrated through empirical data that Thai learners are able to accurately pronounce Korean tense consonants even when they learn them using Thai script, without experiencing significant difficulty. (Suwanajote, 2021). Despite this, differences in Romanization systems between the two languages may cause confusion when Thai learners attempt to transcribe loanwords into Korean on their own.

Accordingly, this study proposes the hypothesis that Thai learners may produce errors when transcribing loanwords into Korean because the two languages employ different Romanization conventions. For instance, although a consonant may be perceived as a tense sound in Thai, it may correspond to an aspirated sound in Korean. As an example, the English word "party" is pronounced as "파티"[p] in Korean, using an aspirated consonant, whereas in Thai it is pronounced as "ปาร์ตี้,"[p'] with a tense consonant. As a result, Thai learners may incorrectly transcribe "party" into Korean as "빠띠."[p']

This study aims to investigate whether such errors arise when Thai learners independently attempt to transcribe loanwords into Korean, and if so, how these errors can be effectively addressed.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

To examine whether learning the Korean Romanization system improves Korean loanword transcription skills among Thai learners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Scope

1. Participants

This study was conducted with 19 participants who completed the Korean Language 1A course（60 hours）at the Bangkok 2 King Sejong Institute of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

2. Research Duration

The duration of the research was one week in December 2025.

Methodology

1. Research Methodology

This study is a quantitative research study that analyzes the effects of learning the Korean Romanization system on improving Korean loanword transcription skills among Thai learners.

2. Research Process

Test 1：

The participants were randomly divided into two groups. Participants in Group A were first instructed on the rules that Koreans follow when representing Korean sounds using the Roman alphabet. Based on these rules, they were asked to transcribe English words written in Roman letters into Korean according to their perceived pronunciation. Data were collected from this task.

The English words used in this test were as follows：

Clinic, Korea, K-pop, Kilogram, Taiwan, TikTok, Team, Park, Promotion, Party

The following information was provided to the students：

ㄲ = kk	ㅋ = k	ㄸ = dd	ㅌ = t	ㅃ = bb	ㅍ = p

Test 2：

Participants in Group B were not provided with the above information at the beginning. Instead, they were first asked to transcribe the English words written in Roman letters into Korean according to their own judgment and perceived pronunciation. Data were collected from this initial task.

Test 3：

Afterward, the same rules that had been presented to Group A regarding the Romanization of Korean were explained to Group B. The participants were then asked to transcribe the same English words into Korean again, following those rules and based on their perceived

pronunciation.

Test 4:

Evaluation focused solely on whether the initial consonant of each of the ten words was transcribed correctly; other types of errors were not evaluated. Scoring was conducted as follows:

Evaluation Score:
0 = Aspirated (correct answer)
1 = Tense (incorrect answer)
2 = Lax (incorrect answer)

3. Data collection

Test 1:

Participants in Group A were provided with an explanation, via a Google Survey link, that in Korean the consonants ㄱ, ㄷ, and ㅂ correspond to the English letters K, T, and P, respectively. Based on this explanation, they were asked to transcribe ten English words into Korean as they sounded when pronounced aloud.

Test 2:

Participants in Group B were asked, via a Google Survey link, to transcribe ten English words into Korean according to their existing knowledge and perceived pronunciation.

Test 3:

Participants in Group B were then provided with the same explanation that had been given to Group A. Following this instruction, they were asked to transcribe the same ten English words into Korean again based on perceived pronunciation.

Test 4:

The researcher examined the responses submitted through the Google Survey link. Evaluation focused solely on whether the initial consonant was correctly transcribed as an aspirated consonant; other aspects of the transcription were not evaluated. Responses were categorized according to whether the initial consonant was incorrectly transcribed as a tense or lax consonant, and the results were tabulated accordingly.

4. Data Analysis

The researcher employs percentage on each word.

RESULTS

The evaluation results of Test 1 are presented in Table 1. The correct response rate was 79.2%. Incorrect transcriptions accounted for 4.2% of cases in which tense consonants were used, and 16.7% of cases in which lax consonants were used.

Table 1 Test 1 Evaluation

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12
Clinic	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	0
Korea	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
K-pop	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Kilogram	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Taiwan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tik-tok	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Team	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Park	2	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	2
Promotion	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Party	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

The evaluation results of Test 2 are presented in Table 2. The correct response rate was 72.9%. Incorrect transcriptions accounted for 14.3% of cases in which tense consonants were used, and 12.9% of cases in which lax consonants were used.

Table 2 Test 2 Evaluation

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7
Clinic	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Korea	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
K-pop	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Kilogram	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
Taiwan	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
Tik-tok	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Team	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Park	1	1	0	0	0	2	0
Promotion	1	2	0	2	1	0	0
Party	1	0	0	1	2	0	0

The evaluation results of Test 3 are shown in Table 3. The correct answer rate increased to 87.1%. Cases incorrectly transcribed based on pronunciation decreased to 5.7%, and cases incorrectly transcribed based on spelling decreased to 7.1%.

Table 3 Test 3 Evaluation

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7
Clinic	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Korea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K-pop	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
Kilogram	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taiwan	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Tik-tok	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Team	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Park	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Promotion	0	2	0	2	0	0	0
Party	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

DISCUSSION

When students were asked to transcribe loanwords into Korean Alphabets using only their existing background knowledge, the correct answer rate was the lowest at 72.9%. However, when the same students were asked to try again after being taught some rules of the Korean Romanization system related to aspirated and tense consonants, the correct answer rate increased to 87.1%. When students were taught the Korean Romanization rules without first attempting the task based on their prior knowledge, the correct answer rate was 79.2%, which is higher than the group that received no instruction at all, but lower than the group that received instruction after first attempting the task independently based on their background knowledge.

Interestingly, there was only a 1.5 percentage-point difference between Group A and Group B in the rate of incorrect transcription as tense consonants. However, the rate of incorrect transcription as lax consonants in Group B was less than half that of Group A. This suggests that when learners first attempt transcription based on their existing background knowledge and initially make errors by using lax consonants, subsequent instruction on aspirated and tense consonants leads to a more pronounced reduction in lax-consonant errors.

SUGGESTIONS

It is recommended that Thai learners of Korean first be given the opportunity to attempt writing loanwords in Korean based on their existing knowledge before being instructed on the rules for loanword transcription, followed by an explanation of how loanword transcription conventions differ between Korean and Thai.

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