

## World

# Korea bad-mouths the 'cultural threat' from Konglish slang

## South Korea

Richard Lloyd Parry Asia Editor

Is your *bepu* a *gaegeumaen*?\* Then you must be speaking "Konglish", a combination of English and Korean that is making the slang of young people in comprehensible to an older generation.

South Korea's prime minister promised this month to reduce the use of foreign words and idioms in a country whose pride in its national language is closely tied up with its tragic history of conquest and colonisation.

Despite being inspired by English terms gleaned from films, television programmes and pop songs, differences in Korean pronunciation often make Konglish words baffling to speakers of both languages. Even simple words such as fork and juice come out in Korean as *pokeu* and *juseu*. Konglish frequently takes this a stage further by abbreviating and combining terms until they are unrecognisable.

*Gaegeumaen*, which means a comedian, comes from the English term "gag man". *Beobeori*, meaning a trench coat, is a Koreanisation of the brand name Burberry. *Aisyoping* translates as window shopping. Other Konglish words include *bepu*, meaning best friend, *widcorona* (living with coronavirus) and *untact* (contactless payments).

Last week South Korea celebrated Hangul Day, a celebration and commemoration of the introduction of the country's unique Hangul script by King Sejong on October 9, 1446. The peninsula's history of domination by great powers gives a nationalist edge to efforts to purify its language, which has been threatened over the years.

During the Joseon Period (1392 to 1897), official documents were written in Chinese. In the pre-war colonial period, Koreans were forced to speak Japanese and take Japanese names. Even before the internet's arrival, the country came under the influence of English spoken by American soldiers based after the 1950-53 Korean War.

"Hangul has been part of national pride and language and is a tool that distinguishes one culture from another," said the Korean Language Society, which campaigns to preserve the purity of Korean. "If people use more English words, they naturally result in the use of less Korean vocabulary. If such a trend continues, it can pose a grave threat to our cultural identity."

In a message on Hangul day, Kim Boo-kyum, the prime minister, said: "The government will continue its efforts to reduce the use of unnecessary foreign words."

\*Is your best friend a comedian?



Watch out or I'll eat you A lion club spent five minutes squaring up to a camera in the Masai Mara reserve, Kenya, after hearing it being operated remotely

# Owl shows its face after 150 years

## Ghana

Jane Flanagan

An African owl described as the "holy grail" for bird-spotters has been photographed in the wild for the first time.

An elusive Shelley's eagle-owl flew past two British scientists working in Atewa forest, Ghana, last week before settling on a nearby branch.

"It was so large, at first we thought it was an eagle," Joseph Tobias, a biologist at Imperial College London, said. "Luckily it perched on a low branch and when we lifted our binoculars our jaws dropped. There is no other owl in Africa's rainforests that big."

After comparing their image of the black-eyed owl with the only other image of the species ever taken — in 1975 of a captive specimen at Antwerp zoo — ornithologists have endorsed the sighting. It is the first confirmed glimpse of a Shelley's eagle owl in Ghana since the 1870s. The sighting has brought hope for the bird's survival and keen birdwatchers are making plans to get to Atewa forest to try to spot one.

The Shelley's eagle-owl was seen in Ghana



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