

Subject: Comments on L2/17-125, “Preliminary Proposal for Encoding New Hangul characters (for some English consonant sounds)” written by S. and S. Oh

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To: UTC

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Pages: 2

L2/17-126

Immediate objection.

1. This proposal is merely an invention, not based on actual usage. I heard that there have been several attempts to add new hangul jamo letters, and none of them has been backed by actual usage.

And precomposed hangul syllables are no longer suitable for encoding.

2. The images used as evidence do not even match the jamo characters the authors are proposing to add. Therefore, no actual evidence is provided for this proposal.

Moreover, the evidence has nothing to do with sounds in loanwords.

1) Those two “th”s are just used to make fun of the entertainer’s inability to pronounce ㅅ ([s]) or ㅆ ([ʃ]) correctly (as far as I know, he pronounces ㅅ and ㅆ similar to [θ] (English ⟨th⟩ in *thin*, and this is where that spelling “th” is coming from)). The original phrase is “쓰름매미인 쓰르라미는” and the words in this phrase are entirely of native Korean origin.

- 쓰름매미 and 쓰르라미 are two different names of a certain species under the cicada family (and the 쓰름-/쓰르라미 part is just an onomatopoeia of the chirping sound of that insect – it has absolutely nothing to do with loanwords). The structure “A인 B” is something like “B, which is A” (인 is similar to Japanese である), and 는 is a topic marker (similar to Japanese は (wa)). The whole phrase means something like “쓰르라미, which is (also called / also known as) 쓰름매미, ...”

2) “A ㅏ ...” is just internet slang. The proper form is “아...” or “아아...” (same as the English interjection “ah...”). And “A” is neither a consonant letter nor used for writing a consonant sound. Also, I am pretty sure that most people who use A ㅏ do not regard “A” as a new hangul jamo (and do not think that “A” needs to be added as a new hangul jamo).

3. To begin with, it is impossible to accurately transcribe various sounds in various languages into hangul.

1) The authors of the proposal are only thinking about English consonant sounds. What about [ʀ] (French ⟨r⟩), [x] (Spanish ⟨j⟩ and German ⟨ch⟩), [r̥] (trilled R; Spanish ⟨rr⟩), [ʃ] (⟨sh⟩ in Chinese pinyin and ⟨ш⟩ in Russian), [ç] (Albanian ⟨q⟩), [ɲ] (Japanese ん), [ɣ] (Mongolian ⟨ɳ⟩), [q] (in Arabic and Uyghur), and other various consonant sounds? What about consonant clusters such as [stɹ] (⟨str⟩ in English *strong*)?

2) And what about vowel sounds? What about [œ] (French ⟨eu⟩ in *jeune*), [ɛ̃] (⟨e⟩ in Chinese pinyin), [œ̃] (⟨oe⟩ in Cantonese Jyutping), [ɪ] (English ⟨i⟩ in *spin*), [ʊ] (English ⟨u⟩ in *put*), [ɔ̃] (English ⟨aw⟩ in *awful*), and other various vowel sounds (note that the examples here include English sounds)? What about nasal vowels in French (*un bon vin blanc* [œ̃ bɔ̃ vɛ̃ blɑ̃])? And what about [wi] (English pronoun *we*) and [y] (French ⟨u⟩ and German ⟨ü⟩), which are usually both written ㅟ in hangul?

3) And what about suprasegmentals? What about primary and secondary stress in English? What about tones in Chinese, Lao, Thai, Vietnamese, and many other languages?

4) Also, do the authors want to make a “phonemic” distinction, or a “phonetic” distinction? If it is the latter, allophones of the same phoneme need to be written differently. For example, the *l* in *long* and the *l* in *feel* need to be written differently (phonemically both /l/; phonetically [l] and [ɫ] respectively), the *m* in *mouse* and the *m* in *symphony* need to be written differently (phonemically both /m/; phonetically [m] and [ɱ] respectively), and so on.

If the UTC accepts this proposal, it will only set a very bad precedent. If this proposal is accepted, Korean speakers who know foreign languages will start to make proposals like this one, and the UTC will have to accept all of them. I strongly object to this proposal and recommend that the UTC should not accept any proposal like this one at all, unless there is a highly convincing and important reason to accept it.

4. There are several errors and problems in the proposal. Even though I am not an expert in phonetics, I can easily spot some errors and problems. For instance,

1) — ([u] in IPA) is not an “inherent” vowel. And there are languages that have an [u] sound (as a separate phoneme). Turkish is one of them (written ⟨ı⟩, dotless i). If the authors use — when a consonant is not followed by a vowel, how will they make a distinction between Turkish *ısı* (heat) and *ıs* in *ıspanak* (spinach) in hangul? The latter does not have an [u] sound right after the [s] sound.

2) In English, [v], [z], [f], [ð], and [θ] very frequently appear in the syllable coda. Examples are *love*, *rose*, *chief*, *smooth*, *bath*, etc.

There are lots of minor errors as well (for example, 399 times 27 is 10773, not 10783), but I simply decided not to list them here.

5. Homographs (same spelling, different meaning) exist in all languages. Therefore, “there are homographs” cannot always be a convincing reason to add a new character. One needs more than that.

6. As a side note, using a “Z” as a hangul consonant is not a good idea, as it can be easily mistaken for the existing ㅈ. A lot of Korean speakers write a ㅈ like a Z (in handwriting, as that is easier and faster to write), and adding a real Z to hangul will only cause problems.

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