

# Linguistic innovation in Korean

November 21, 2016

# Reminder about presentation dates

- 11/30 (W)
  - Group 2 (윤광열, 윤영재, Sunny, 이다원)
  - Group 5 (Jiayu, Meiqiong, 김기현, 임상옥)
  - Group 6 (이정교, Janet, 조해인, Joe)
- 12/5 (M)
  - Group 4 (Camille, Heidi, 전수현, 김림)
  - Group 7 (Jodie, Sarah, 박도연, 김은희)
  - Group 1 (박찬희, 구동영, 조소은, 김송주)
- 12/7 (W)
  - Group 3 (권진희, 김민석, 방상수, 이종호)
  - Group 8 (유승명, 현지아, 송예, Kathy)
  - 나종문
- 12/12 (M)
  - 김사홍
  - 안형민

# Two kinds of innovation

- **Linguistic innovation** simply refers to anything new that is happening in/to a language
- In this class, we will discuss two specific types of innovation:
  - Abbreviations
  - Loanwords

# Abbreviations in English

- Kaplan discusses several types of English abbreviations:
- **Acronym** – reducing a multi-word expression to the first letters of each word (e.g. I don't know = IDK)
- Using the names of letters and numbers – e.g. the number 8 can also represent the sound sequence /eɪt/, rendering gr8 as /greɪt/ “great”
- Representations of speech – Spelling a word more closely to how it is pronounced by e.g. deleting or substituting letters.

# Abbreviations in Korean

- Due to linguistic differences, these same categories do not carry over so neatly into Korean.
- Many abbreviations in Korean work like acronyms but at the syllable (eumjeol) level
  - 혼밥 = **혼**자 먹는 **밥**
  - 갑툭튀 = **갑**자기 **툭** 튀어나오다
  - 셀카 = **셀프** **카**메라 (self camera)
  - 지못미 = **지**켜주지 **못**해서 **미**안해
- As Kaplan argues, however, it's not that case that all abbreviations are always criticized.
  - 수능 = 대학**수**학**능**력시험
  - 고대 = **고**려**대**학교

# What is a loanword?

- **Loanword**: a word introduced from language into another
- The term **borrow** is used to describe the introduction of a loanword.
- Loanwords stick out because they are *new* (there are many new native words that stick out too) and *foreign* (they may not match native phonological patterns).
  - 스타디 // study
  - 로스쿨 // law school
  - 비전 // vision
  - 피자 // pizza
  - 투잡 // working two jobs

# People care

- Concern for language “purity” can be found in speakers of almost any language
- The National Institute of the Korean Language encourages people to use fewer loanwords
  - Noble motivation
  - But probably unnecessary (not to mention futile)

# What makes a word “Korean”?

- Many words are loanwords – about 70% of Korean words are loanwords from Chinese (i.e. Sino-Korean)
- Are Sino-Korean words “Korean”?
- Consider the word 케첩 // Ketchup
  - Originally a fish sauce in southern China, “kê-chiap” 鮭汁
  - Through trade spread to southeast Asia (cf. modern day Indonesian “kecap” = soy sauce)
  - In the 17<sup>th</sup> century European sailors brought it back home (vegetables, including tomatoes, were added much later)
  - Korean borrowed it from English in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
  - What if it were called 해첩 haejeup (鮭汁)? Would that be “Korean”?



# What makes a word “Korean”?

- Compare this with the word 빵 “bread”
  - Borrowed from Portuguese (pão) into Japanese (パン pan)
  - Subsequently borrowed into Korean
  - Is 빵 a Korean word? Maybe not, but it feels less foreign than 케첩.
  - Definitely less foreign than 머핀 “muffin” or 도넛 “donut”

# What makes a word “Korean”?

- At this point you have to ask yourself – does being “foreign” simply have to do with the amount of time that has passed since it was borrowed?
- As an extreme example, consider the word 사자 “lion”.

# What makes a word “Korean”?

- Korean **사자** *saja* > Chinese **獅子** *shīzi* > Sanskrit *simha*
  - cf. Indian surname *Singh*, along with *Singapore* “City of lions”
  - Further related: English *serendipity* > Arabic *Sarandīb* > Sanskrit *Simhaladvipa* “Island of the Lion-blooded”
  - English *Ceylon* > Portuguese *Ceilão* > Arabic *Sarandīb*
  - Also hypothesized: Proto-Bantu *\*cimba* (cf. Swahili *simba*)
- So, is **사자** Korean? (or even Chinese?)



# What makes a word “Korean”?

- The point is, if we’re going to talk about language policy and protecting Korea from linguistic intrusion, we should have a clear and principled definition of what a Korean word is.
- e.g. A word is “Korean” if it has property X.
- Any suggestions?

# Jeff's humble suggestion

- If Korean people use a word when speaking in Korean with other Koreans, the word is, by definition, “Korean”. It may have its origin in another language (like most Real Korean™ words), but this does not compromise its Koreanness. Any word that has its origin in another language was, at some point in history, new.

# Words are borrowed for a reason

- Can introduce new meanings, e.g. 컴퓨터 computer
  - But wait, the Chinese didn't cave to imperialism! They say 电脑, or “electric brain”.
  - Yes, this is true, but when North Korea does this everyone (include South Koreans) make fun of them (c.f. Hamburger = 고기겹빵).
- Can let speakers avoid using certain expressions
  - What is the appeal of 싱글 “single” or 투잡 “two job”?

# Words are borrowed for a reason

- They can also index certain qualities, e.g. modernity, wealth, innovation, etc.
- Even if a word becomes borrowed, speakers may still have a choice of whether to use it.
  - You don't have any choice about 컴퓨터
  - But you can choose between, say, 메이크업 and 화장품
  - Or between “메이크업” and “makeup”



# What is the role of English in Korea?

- Are people *actually speaking* English more? Or just borrowing more English words? And if so, what is the role of such words?
- Even in neighborhoods where English signs are prevalent, they serve decorative or symbolic functions.
- Is English used to convey information? Or simply index some desirable qualities?



# Conclusions

- Using a lot of loanwords doesn't mean that people are abandoning their native language.
  - Must also look at the function and motivation of loanword use.
  - It's not the case that people are *actually speaking* English just because it's cool.
- Language loss does exist, but it is often the result of much more large-scale events or changes in power.
  - Colonialism, war, government regulation
  - If Korean were to lose out to English just through cultural exchange, the change would be so gradual it would be hard to argue Korean were actually being lost (much in the way that 70% of "Korean" words are "Chinese").