Language Journal

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After reviewing several classes on Sino-korean and loan words, which mainly consist of Chinese characters and English words respectively, I came to think that there are also some words that are made of both languages. These words are usually so common that we don’t even think they are (or were) ‘foreign’ unless we look into them. ‘싱크대’ is one of those words. The English word ‘Sink’ and the Chinese word ‘臺’ combine and make a new Korean version of a ‘sink.’ Why is this happening?

It might be a hasty generalization, but many of those words are application of other words that already existed in Korea. For example, there are other usage of ‘-대’ in words like ‘시상대’ or ‘접수대.’ We are familiar with ‘대’ coming at the end of words. So when we took the new English concept, we add it in order to make it sound more ‘natural.’ Although there seems to be no strict rule on this, I think we feel comfortable this way. ‘메모지’ is another example. The word ‘memo’ itself is enough to express a paper on which we write. But we take the trouble to divide it into ‘메모’ and ‘메모지’, in the same context of ‘포장지’ and ‘편지지.’ Also, we don’t think ‘제빵사’ is a foreign word because we use words that have a similar structure like ‘제약사(약제사)’ or ‘제작사.’ To the extent that there are other Korean words we can refer to, we don’t feel a distance in those words.

In the process of taking new concepts from other countries, we tend to lean on familiar concepts and make a new words in reflection of those ‘already Korean words.’-this is my hypothesis. I think there needs to be more observation to conclude that. But it’s very interesting to see familiar words with an unfamiliar perspective.

<Similar Wordlist>

싱크대, 샤프심, 무선랜, 신용카드, 제빵사, 휴대폰, 수박바, 물컵, 온수매트, 메모지, 할인쿠폰 등