

Sean Rhee

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Writer's Memo

The major concerns I had writing this paper were the coherence of the content and the use of proper grammar. The initial draft contained several ambiguous descriptions and lack of content explanation. For instance, the effect of Japanese occupation on the Korean language was not explicitly mentioned. Hence, I inserted a sentence to clarify the effect. In the same manner, I explained that even though Janglish did greatly influence Konglish, it does not account for all of Konglish's roots. Likewise, I noticed that the use of 'lexicon-heavy dialect' and 'Mandarin' could be misleading. To solve this issue, I reworded 'lexicon-heavy dialect' to 'variations of lexical origins' and specified 'Mandarin' to 'Mandarinized Korean'. I believe these clarifications will help the readers understand the paper better, rather than expecting the readers to interpret the unclear descriptions. With regard to grammar, I corrected the passive voice to the active voice and attempted to diversify the sentence structures. For instance, I realized that I was using the infinitives throughout the paper, so I changed some of the forms into gerunds (i.e. "to coin terms" to ", coining terms"). I believe these small changes added more 'personality' to my writing.

I had a hard time shortening the paper because I struggled to 'let go' some excessive information and to deliver my arguments in a concise manner. I tend to be verbose in my writing and this paper was not an exception. Thus, if I had more time to work on this paper, I would have reconstructed my writing to make it more succinct. Overall, however, I am pleased with the improved version of the paper.

Konglish: Linguistic Abomination or Promising Production?

Introduction

How would people react if someone yelled ‘fighting’, as they prepared for an important presentation or a big sports match? Some might blankly stare at the person while others might put up their guards, expecting a sudden punch or a kick. Most people who are familiar with the Korean culture, however, would thank the person since the term ‘fighting’ (파이팅) is an endearing term that wishes good luck. Even though ‘fighting’ is not an original Korean expression, it is widely used as one of many vocabularies in Koreanized English, or Konglish. In this paper, I will investigate the origin, linguistic rules and social reputation of Konglish.

History of Konglish

The origin of Konglish cannot be attributed to a single country or event. However, Japan and the United States are often credited for having the strongest influence on the creation of Konglish. During the Japanese colonial rule of South Korea (1910 – 1945), the use of Korean was outlawed, and Japanese was forced upon Koreans (McPhail, 2018). Due to the linguistic oppression, features of Japanese and Japanese English, or Janglish, integrated into Korean. Even after 73 years of liberation, Japan’s influence on South Korea is deeply rooted in the Korean society, particularly in its linguistic patterns. Japan is known for its minimalist culture which favors succinctness. This mindset is strongly reflected in its use of English in which the user shortens a word or phrase to make the pronunciation shorter and, potentially, more efficient (Park, 1996). Granted, contractions of certain words are allowed within the rules of English—as seen in the common usage of ‘flu’ instead of ‘influenza’—but Janglish simplifies every word

regardless of the rule¹. This arbitrary simplification is a prominent feature of Janglish and the period of Japanese occupation facilitated its smooth transition into the South Korean language. Even though Janglish is not the only reason for the rise of Konglish, it greatly influenced a considerable portion of the dialect.

South Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945 paved the way for other foreign nations to enter South Korea. In particular, the United States' military support during the Korean War (1950 – 1953) brought in an influx of American soldiers and culture. Likewise, as South Korea experienced a rapid economic boom after the war, it began to recognize the economic potential of English and encouraged the implementation of English in education and business (McPhail, 2018). With the spread and institutionalization of English, a branch of Koreanized English naturally grew. Thus, it is evident that Konglish is a product of decades of linguistic exchanges and integration.

Lexical Variations of Konglish

A prominent feature of Konglish is its variation of lexical origins which is commonly used in daily conversations. There are countless varieties of Konglish lexicon, but they can be divided into three categories.

1. The first category is Janglish-influenced words. As mentioned in the history of Konglish, Japanese language tends to simplify every word and this phenomenon vividly left its mark on Konglish. In fact, most Konglish lexicon consists of loan words from Janglish. For instance, in Janglish, 'personal computer' is shortened to 'pasokon' (パソコン) and

¹ This variety of Janglish-influenced Konglish will be discussed in further in the Lexical Variations of Konglish.

‘combination’ is shortened to ‘combi’ (콘비). Konglish follows a similar rule, coining terms such as ‘autobi’ (오토바이) from ‘automatic bicycle’ and ‘ment’ (멘트) from ‘commentary’ (Park, 1996).

2. The second category consists of words of English-origin that are used without knowing their exact definition. For example, ‘maker’ (메이커) refers to a famous brand and ‘talent’ (탤런트) is comparable to entertainers or actors. Even though there are subtle similarities between Konglish lexicon and its English counterpart, the usage of Konglish can be confusing for native English speakers nonetheless (Kang, 2016).
3. The third category includes English-seeming words that do not exist in the English lexicon. That is, English serves as a basis for these words. The usage of ‘handphone’ (핸드폰) instead of a ‘cellphone/mobile’ and ‘cunning paper’ (컨닝페이퍼) in place of a ‘cheat sheet/crib sheet’ are examples of this category (Park, 1996).

The three categories of Konglish are seldom used outside the circle of Konglish speakers, thus assigning a covert prestige to the dialect (Crystal, 2003). In fact, through westernization and globalization, the community which accepts this non-standard variety is expanding in South Korea. This is not to say, however, that Konglish is unanimously accepted across South Korea.

Linguistic Reputation of Konglish

As discussed previously, the origin of Konglish is an eclectic one. Hence, there are polarizing opinions toward the dialect across South Korea. Konglish rejectionists argue that

Konglish contaminates Korean and might push it to the point of language death, or linguicide. Due to the history of oppression from Japan, rejectionists perceive Korean as a symbol of prestige and national pride. Consequently, since Konglish is closely connected to Janglish, rejectionists view Konglish as an appalling linguistic vandalism and advocate for the purification of the national language, similar to the linguistic movement in France (Crystal, 2003).

Another source of concern that the rejectionists have is the excessive use of foreign languages and incorrect dialects. In fact, a study conducted in 2001 on signboards effectively demonstrated the overwhelming presence of foreign languages and the marginalization of Korean. Out of 13,921 signs across 17 regions in South Korea, 56.3 percent were written in a foreign language—predominantly English and Konglish—while only 5.6 percent were written in traditional Korean (Min, 2001). This surprising result illustrates the dominance of foreign languages and South Korea's fondness for everything foreign. As a result, it is reasonable that the rejectionists demand protection from these invasive languages and dialects such as Konglish in order to preserve Korean culture and heritage.

Moreover, the rejectionists address that in the era of globalization, an 'incorrect' version of English that fails to facilitate a comprehensible conversation is problematic. No matter how fluently one speaks Konglish, the dialect renders useless in conversations with native English speakers (Park, 1996). Therefore, the rejectionists insist that it is better to use authentic, proper Korean or English words and phrases rather than using useless Konglish derivatives.

On the other hand, the proponents of Konglish defend the dialect, stating that it is an appropriate addition to Korean. In Chapter 3 of *English as a Global Language*, Crystal claims that "when a language arrives in a new country, it does not necessarily come to be adopted. It has to prove its worth" (Crystal, 2003). In the case of English, it has proven its worth in South Korea

through acting as the medium of economic growth. Thus, proponents suggest that the settlement of English in South Korea is warranted and the creation of Konglish is a natural linguistic process.

Moreover, the proponents debunk the rejectionists' claim that Korean is a 'pure' language that was untouched until the invasion of Konglish. In fact, Korean contains a myriad of Mandarin-origin words, but rejectionists rarely argue that Mandarinized Korean is corrupting Korean because it has been a part of the language for ages (Kang, 2016). Based on the linguistic history of Korean, proponents speculate that with time, Konglish will position itself in a similar manner as Mandarinized Korean and the public will soon accept the dialect as its own. Therefore, the proponents affirm that Konglish is not a dirty stain on the seemingly-pure Korean language, but an addition to the multifaceted nature of Korean that further diversifies the language.

Conclusion

The position of Konglish in South Korea is undoubtedly an intriguing and necessary topic of discussion. After exploring the origin, rules and contrasting opinions of Konglish, the controversy surrounding Konglish raises further questions on how countries should treat these linguistic developments in its society and institutions. In the ever-expanding global village, the blend of languages is becoming commonplace, so it is worthwhile not only for linguists, but for the global citizens to examine this inquiry. To that I say, 'fighting'!

"I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment."

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