

ABSTRACT

An Investigation of the Evolution from Old Spoken Korean to Contemporary Spoken Korean

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This thesis analyzes and monitors the evolution of spoken Korean with regards to major political and social changes on the Korean peninsula. The first chapter considers significant historical events prior to 1948 and how they affected spoken Korean. The second chapter discusses how the Korean language has changed since 1948, particularly between North Korea and South Korea. The final chapter examines how the technological revolution has impacted speech in a modern Korea. It also considers modern cultural trends – such as ‘aegyo’ culture and the rise of e-games – into the forming of this dynamic language.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EVOLUTION FROM OLD SPOKEN KOREAN TO
CONTEMPORARY SPOKEN KOREAN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to Thesis.	1
Chapter One: A Brief History of the Spoken Korean Language until 1948.	2
Chapter Two: Korean Language 1948 – Present	9
Chapter Three: Modern Korean in the Internet Age	17
Conclusion to Thesis	36
Bibliography	37

INTRODUCTION TO THESIS

Spoken language is a dynamic and diverse entity. In addition to external linguistical influences, a country's religion, politics, and culture all heavily influence a particular peoples' spoken language. This thesis will explore the influences impacting modern spoken Korean from its earlier roots to recent internet slang. It will also discuss significant landmark events, such as the creation of the Korean alphabet and the division of the peninsula, and how they have impacted the spoken language.

The first chapter will describe forces in the evolution of spoken Korean from its earliest times until 1948, a major event during which the peninsula became independent. The second chapter discusses major forces changing spoken Korean after 1948. In particular, it will compare the spoken languages of North and South Korea. Finally, the third chapter will emphasize how globalization – specifically the Internet – affected and continues to impact spoken Korean.

CHAPTER ONE

A Brief History of the Spoken Korean Language until 1948

The Korean language is considered unique partly due to its largely unknown origins. Linguists have attempted to trace its origins by classifying it as an Altaic language along with Mongolian, Turkish, and Japanese. However, despite their best efforts, the exact origins of the Korean language still remain a mystery³. Even though the precise origins of Korean may not be known, scholars have not stopped from deducing how the ancient kingdoms of Korea spoke and interacted with each other and other peoples around them. In the 15th century, the invention of the Korean alphabet, Hangeul, catalyzed change that would be very influential in the evolution of spoken Korean. As the modern era approached, the influence of foreign powers and their languages on the Korean spoken language increased and became ever more apparent. Today, as a result of these foreign influences, modern spoken Korean is a colorful mix of pure Korean words and loan words from Chinese, English, Japanese, French, and many other languages¹⁶.

Origins of Spoken Language during Three Kingdoms Era

The earliest written records of people living in the Korean peninsula date back to the 7th century BCE. Perhaps not too surprisingly, extremely few records have survived from this era that gives us clues as to what their spoken language might be like³. The year 57 B.C.E is the generally accepted period when the 3 kingdom era of Baekje (백제), Shilla (신라), and Goguryeo (고구려) started¹¹. It is during this time that linguists have put together some ideas about the ancient spoken language. Scholars like Gu Dae Yul (구대열) studied ancient archives, records, and books from the three kingdom time period and concluded that while the kingdoms used different dialects, they could still communicate with each other². His research indicates that, in addition, speech was probably not the only factor in communication. He suggested, moreover, that other factors such as body language aided inter-kingdom communication. However, when the Shilla Kingdom unified the peninsula in 935 CE, its spoken language would eventually come to dominate all other spoken forms². The subsequent evolution of the ancient Shilla spoken language gave rise to the modern Korean language people know and speak today.

Creation of Hangeul in 1443 CE

It would not be until after the Shilla Dynasty unified the Korean peninsula in 935 CE⁴ that a recognizable unified Korean language would begin to appear.

Even though, during this era, the spoken language was what would be known and recognized as Korean, the written language script was borrowed from Chinese characters called Hanja (한자). Due to these characters' complexity, only the upper class and scholars could afford the time and effort to learn how to write, leaving the lower classes with virtually no opportunity to learn^{4,17}.

This situation changed drastically when in 1443 CE King Sejong and his scholars introduced the Hunminjeongeum (훈민정음), an alphabet for his people to learn how to read and write, known today as Hangeul (한글). However, due to the era's shaky and unpredictable political situation and the strong opposition to the alphabet by the aristocracy who enjoyed being the only literate class, the newly created alphabet was not immediately implemented, and the society of the day continued to use Chinese characters as their main written script¹⁷.

Despite this delayed application of the new alphabet, the creation of Hangeul had a significant influence on the spoken language of the Korean peninsula. One such impact was the start of a unifying drive where the identity of being "Korean" started to take shape. Now that a uniquely "Korean" writing system was invented to complement the uniquely "Korean" sounds and vowels, Koreans started to

develop their own distinctive identity separate from that of other nearby powers such as China¹⁷.

European & US Influence

Europeans first became aware of Korea's (at the time, Joseon Dynasty) existence most likely during the 16th century when the Spanish and Portuguese were competing against each other for trading benefits with Japan¹⁹. However, due to the fact that Korea was smaller in size, quite hostile to foreigners, and embroiled in wars with its neighbors, the peninsula was not open and welcoming towards the early European traders. As a result, most of the European trading and exploration in east Asia occurred on Chinese or Japanese soil whereas Korea remained only a vague reference to a different land in the memoirs of the early merchants or to an unknown peninsular island on the corner of a map¹⁹.

The first modern Western influences on the Korean language trace their roots to the 19th century where in 1876, the Joseon dynasty signed their first modern treaty with Japan¹⁷. Soon, other western countries such as the United States, Britain, and France, each 'persuaded' Joseon to sign separate treaties. In 1883, Joseon founded its first modern school in order to teach interpreters. Up to this point, foreign language influences on spoken Korean were minimal; however, this changed

in 1885 when Horace Grant Underwood and Henry Gerhard Appenzeller were the first legal missionaries allowed on Korean land⁵. When they founded their language schools in Korea, their native western tongues became a powerful influence on the evolution of the Korean language.

One powerful force for the insertion of foreign vocabulary into spoken Korean was newspapers. Newspapers, like the *Hansong Sunbo* (한성순보) in 1883, were printed in Chinese characters and had such a formal tone that even after publishing a few articles using the Korean alphabet, they were not profitable and shut down. However, that was not to mean that newspapers would not play a future role in propagating foreign words into the lives of everyday Koreans. In 1896, periodicals publishing solely in Hangeul, like the *Independent* (독립 [dokrip]), were not only full of inspiration for a better life, but also urged their readers to adopt western traditions. Perhaps the success of integrating foreign words into spoken Korean language was a mere consequence since the same newspapers advocating reform also published messages calling for the adoption of western culture¹⁷.

Japanese Influences

Due to their proximity to one another, Japan and Korea share a long history. Whether their relationship was one of a state of war or peaceful trade, Japan's

strongest influence on the Korean language took place during its occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945. During this period, the Japanese empire suppressed all aspects of the Korean language in preference to the glorification of the Japanese language. As a result, all schools taught Japanese and it became illegal to use or speak Korean and use its alphabet. On the other hand, the suppression of anything “purely Korean” made Hangeul a symbol of defiance towards Japanese occupation. This, in turn, caused a rise in Hangeul’s popularity as the tired and suppressed population respected the leaders of revolution who used the alphabet⁹.

During occupation, the official language of Korea was Japanese, and as such, all politics, education, and trade were carried out in Japanese. As the Japanese empire sought to expand its power and influence, it came in contact with other languages. As a result, words borrowed from those languages of countries under Japanese domination, became part of the spoken Japanese language. Those words were then incorporated into the Korean language after Korea gained independence³.

Many of the loan words used in modern spoken Korean today were originally Japanese vocabulary that passed to spoken Korean during the occupation period. As a result, many loan words modern speakers use today are simply the Korean pronunciation of the Japanese loan words which in turn came from a

different language. After the occupation, these pronunciations were replaced in favor of the Korean pronunciation of the native language's word^{3,10}.

Conclusions

Since Korean is an isolated language with little understanding of its exact origins, it is virtually impossible to determine early influences on old spoken Korean. Nevertheless, scholars have deciphered the situation of spoken Korean back to the three kingdom period. Since then, many experts have extensively followed the evolution of spoken Korean amidst changes in written languages, foreign influences, and colonization. As this first chapter's purpose was only to introduce a brief history of spoken Korean throughout the centuries, the next one will focus on changes in modern spoken Korean.

CHAPTER TWO

Korean Language from 1948 to Present

After the Second World War ended and Japan signed a peace treaty with the United States, a power vacuum was created when the Japanese occupiers left the peninsula. Since the United States and the Soviet Union had been at war against Japan, both powers wanted to exert their influence on the former Japanese colony. As such, they agreed on a division – the northern portion of the peninsula would remain a puppet state of the Soviet Union while the southern half would remain under US influence. However, in July 1950, the Soviet-backed forces of North Korea invaded South Korea in an undeclared war, unleashing the three-year long Korean War. The conflict ended only in a cease-fire and the creation of a demilitarized zone, effectively cutting off any communication between the two now completely destitute states. Similar to the case between East Germany and West Germany, the two Koreas developed many distinctions between their respective spoken languages³⁵. This chapter continues the investigation into the differences in the evolution of spoken Korean in both North and South Korea.

Evolution of Spoken Korean in South Korea

After 1948, Korean was reinstated as the official language of the peninsula, effectively replacing Japanese. Even then, most texts still used both Hangeul and traditional Chinese characters. Written texts remained this way until Park Jung Hee (박정희) proposed and implemented a plan in 1968 to reform the Korean language over the following 5 years. Gradually, Korean letters came to replace Chinese characters, thus initiating their decline in Korean society. A consequence of this transition was the development and solidification of the Korean culture. As both Japanese and Chinese were being replaced by purely Korean letters and sounds, a sense of unity arose¹⁸.

Perhaps ironically, with the effort to eradicate the influence of particular languages such as Chinese and Japanese, other western languages slowly became incorporated into spoken Korean. Despite that general trend – including changes such as replacing ‘lunchbox’ from the Japanese ‘弁当 [bento]’ to the native Korean word ‘도시락 [dosirak]’ – Korean would remain a diverse language. Following the division of the peninsula after the Korean war, South Korea was put under US influence, and so English words such as ‘computer’ and ‘bus’ were given a Korean pronunciation – 컴퓨터 [kompyuteo] and 버스 [beoseu] respectively – and

incorporated into every day, informal speech¹⁰. Eventually, other western languages and cultures, such as French and German, also came to Korea. Similar to English, some of those cultures' words and expressions – such as ‘빵 (B^hang)’ from the French word for bread, *pain* and ‘아르바이트 (areubaiteu) from the German word for work, *arbeit* – were also adopted into South Korean's colloquial speech. Eventually, the Internet, along with its international sphere of influence, would bring even greater changes to be discussed in the next chapter.

The Korean language has a considerable range of honorific language ranging from special language only meant for when a king is listening to the relatively crude expressions of the common people. After the fall of the Joseon dynasty and the liberation from the Japanese empire, some of these conjugations began to fall out of use or evolved in pronunciation. An example of the former would be the present tense semi-formal tone ‘~오/소 [oh/soh]’. Today, this tense is used mainly among the older generations. The latter category includes the interrogative tone ‘~느냐 [neunya]’. While this has not disappeared, it is gradually being replaced with the particle ‘니 [nee]’ instead³.

Idiomatic expressions also changed during this period of societal upheaval. As mentioned previously, the Japanese colonization and the Korean war left behind

an impoverished and destitute country. However, the Korean society encouraged hard work as the only way out of poverty. As such, several new expressions regarding work and work ethics came to new usage. Below are examples and explanations behind these new phrases.

- 1) The word ‘개고생 [gae goseng]’ is slightly crude. The first syllable, ‘개 [gae]’, means dog. In this case though, it is used to hyperbolize or exaggerate ‘고생 [goseng]’, which itself means ‘hard work’. Thus, the phrase was created to indicate one’s going through a time of extremely hard work⁸.
- 2) The noun ‘노가다 [nogada]’ is used to describe work that is very difficult. The word has a colorful history of coming together from the Japanese word for soil, ‘土方 (ひじかた) [dokata]’, and the Korean romanization of the English word ‘no [노]’. Combining the ‘no [노]’ with the ‘kata’ from the Japanese word, the new phrase comes to describe difficult work. Perhaps not surprisingly, this word is often used by construction workers³⁸.
- 3) The word ‘멘붕 [menbong]’ literally means a mental breakdown which is common when overworking. It is a combination of the Korean romanization of the English word ‘mental’, which gives the ‘멘 [men]’

with the first syllable of the pure Korean word for collapse: ‘붕괴 [bonggwae]’⁸.

- 4) The word ‘빡세다 [B^haksaeda]’ is a new construction that describes one either working diligently or when much work must be completed in a short amount of time⁸.

These new words and phrases described above are often used by the newer generations and have become more popular than several older idiomatic expressions such as ‘손이 싸다 [sonee ssada]’, which means to work efficiently, in addition to ‘손이 붙다 [sonee boota]’, which implies one’s being efficient at one’s work. Comparable to the expressions ‘개고생 [gae goseng]’ and ‘멘붕 [menbong]’, a less positive expression would be ‘손이 거칠다 [sonee geotchilda]’, which describes a person who is really bad at using their hands, or in other words, someone who has a hard time working³⁷.

Evolution of Spoken Korean in North Korea

In contrast to the entry of foreign vocabulary in spoken Korean in the south, North Korea reformed the language in an effort to eradicate foreign influences. This move was influenced by the state’s mission to become self-reliant, one of the main goals of the country’s Juché (주체 [主体]) ideology³⁶. Reforms included actions such

as improving the alphabet, implementing strict spelling rules, and making standard pronunciation consistent with the Pyongyang dialect. In addition, Chinese character-based words were replaced by their pure Korean counterparts¹².

In the middle of the 1960s, the leader and president of North Korea, Kim Il Sung, established a code for standard spoken Korean. In North Korea, this approach was called ‘문화어 [moonhwa-eoh]’, which translates to ‘cultural language’. In South Korea a similar code was established, but under the name of ‘표준어 [pyojineoh]’. Many of the differences in pronunciation and spelling between North and South Korea are a product of the distinctions between these two codes³⁴.

As a result, the Korean spoken in North Korea remains relatively unchanged from the 1940s after Korea’s liberation. However, even then, Korean spoken in North Korea did not completely remain free from foreign influences. New technologies from the Soviet Union reached North Korea, making Russian perhaps the only major foreign language influencing Korean spoken north of the demilitarized zone¹¹.

Even though North Korea was isolating itself from western culture, the country still had to translate foreign names and occasional loan words. This created an interesting division in transliteration between South and North Korea. For

example, the loan word ‘tractor’ was originally introduced to North Korea in Russian by the Soviet Union and in English by the United States in South Korea. This led to a transliteration from Russian in North Korea as opposed to transliteration from English in South Korea. This difference gives (프락포르 [Deurakdoreuh] {трактор}) in North Korea versus (트랙터 [Teureakteo]) in South Korea^{13,34}.

Although the Internet spread quickly in South Korea, it arrived much more slowly in North Korea. Even today, it is accessed only by special sections of the population. As such, the linguistic changes the Internet brought to South Korea are absent when discussing language evolution in the North. However, as South Korean media is smuggled across the Chinese Korean border, it is possible that this trend might eventually change. As refugees make it successfully to South Korea, they tell of code words the general population uses for referring to illegal South Korean media¹².

Conclusion

As both South and North Korea did away with the Japanese linguistical influences after the occupation, the Chinese written characters then became obsolete. North Korea imposed strict spelling rules, and pronunciation became “purer” and

showed an extremely limited foreign word influence. In South Korea, foreign word influence became part of the common vocabulary due to the globalization of its economy.

In both countries, the dialect spoken in their respective capital cities became the dominant spoken form. In South Korea, this dialect, influenced by globalization movements, incorporated many loan words from foreign languages. In North Korea, however, loan words were weeded out and replaced by 'pure' Korean counterparts.

CHAPTER THREE

Modern Korean in the Internet Age

The rise of the Internet, globalization, and instant communication has drastically influenced modern Korean as we know it today. As the younger generations grow up in a technological world, faster and more effective ways of communicating dominate online interactions. As such, abbreviations, contractions, shortenings, and even new styles like young peoples' slang (급식체 [Geupsikchae]) arose from this need to communicate more information, faster and more succinctly in the information age in modern Korea⁷.

The Internet has brought about many interesting trends, one of them being the tendency to shorten words or abbreviate them in order to spend less time writing. Gamers often used these shortenings, abbreviations, and contractions to communicate effectively but succinctly with other gaming partners. As gaming became a favorite pastime of the younger generations, the Korean language evolved to include it in the common language¹.

In addition to the advantages of communicating faster, the Internet brought yet another change to modern spoken Korean. As it brought multi-linguistical users

together, Korean users started incorporating words from other languages. As with these modern trends, it is usually the younger generations that spearhead such developments in language.

Modern trends in spelling and pronunciation

Abbreviations save time and space, something essential for modern Koreans as life is almost defined by the ubiquitous phrase: ‘빨리빨리 [b^halli b^halli]’, which can be roughly translated in English as ‘Hurry up’⁸. Just as the lives of modern Koreans seemingly become faster through the increased use of such phrases, so does communication in writing and texting. Hence, abbreviations have gained a unique position in the lives of modern Koreans. Many of them are also used to communicate profanity without actually writing out the actual word, thus avoiding offending anyone. Below is a list of a few common abbreviations used in texting and a brief explanation behind their meanings.

- 1) A combination of the Korean spelling for the English word ‘no’ (ㄴ [no]) and the Korean word for answer (답 [da^p]) gives the colloquial phrase ‘노답 [noda^p]’. However, this is commonly abbreviated to its consonants, giving ‘ㄴ ㄷ [n d]’.

- 2) A quick way to write ‘thank you’ instead of writing out the whole word, is to abbreviate the word for thanks, ‘감사 [gamsal]’, giving readers the combinations of the two consonants ‘ㄱㅅ [g s]’.
- 3) One of the most popular abbreviations is one that expresses congratulations. The pronunciation of the original word ‘축하 [tchukha]’ is ‘추카 [tchuka]’. Turning ‘추카 [tchuka]’ into an abbreviation gives ‘츄ㅋ [tch k]’.

Also popular among all Koreans are the ubiquitous contractions that usually express the Korean culture of ‘hurry up’; thus, the more contractions, the less time typing and the more quickly one can finish something or move on to a different task. Interestingly, the contractions usually, almost comically, revolve around modern Korean culture and its approach to friendship/dating, work, and leisure. Below is a list of common contractions and a brief explanation behind their individual meanings and how modern Korean society impacted the creation of these new words.

- 1) With ‘남자’ [namjah] meaning male and ‘소개팅’ [sohgaeting] meaning blind date, combining the words together to make ‘남자소개팅’

[namjahsogaeting] and then contracting that further makes ‘남소’ [namsoh], a word used to describe setting up a date with a man.

- 2) The word ‘소개팅’ [sohgaeting], meaning a blind date, is itself a unique combination of a Chinese and an English loanword. The ‘소개’ [sohgae] itself comes from the Chinese (介绍 [jiè shào]) and translates to ‘introduction’, whereas the ‘팅 [ting]’ comes from English with the connotation from words like meeting²⁰.
- 3) When department workers meet up, it’s called a 과(의)미팅 [gwa(eh)meeting], or in short, ‘과팅’ [gwating], whereas the ‘과 [gwaeh]’ translates to department, but it itself is not an ancient construction as it originally comes from ‘부서 (部門) [buseo]’. The word ‘미팅 [meeting]’ is a loanword from English from the common word ‘meeting’. Thus, the joining of these two terms eventually created its modern meaning³¹.
- 4) In a culture where karaoke is popular, phrases like ‘혼자코인노래방’ [honjah koin nohraebang] (Lit. solo coin karaoke) are contracted to ‘혼코노’ [honkonoh]. This recently coined word often gives the impression of singing by oneself at a coin Karaoke and was created to

express the idea of someone singing songs by themselves after suffering some sort of relationship problem or ennui²².

- 5) The non-contracted words for girlfriend and boyfriend ‘여자친구 [yeojahchingu] and 남자친구 [namjahchingu]’ are themselves contracted to ‘여친 [yeochin] and 남친 [namchin]’, respectively. The Korean itself is a loan translation of the English words for girlfriend and boyfriend, respectively²⁶. In English, the words themselves did not gain any romantic meaning until the early twentieth century²⁷. Thus, the loan translation was most likely made after that transition. Prior to their use and insertion into spoken Korean, however, most relationships in Korea did not involve any romantic feelings as would be suggested by the terms ‘girlfriend and boyfriend’, but rather were based on political and/or financial reasons²⁸. When the country modernized, this aspect of personal relationship changed, bringing in the opportunity for such loan transitions to be introduced to the evolving culture. In North Korea, friends, regardless of romantic feelings or not, are often called ‘동무 [dongmu]’, translating to ‘comrade’²⁵.

- 6) In the circumstance of having friends of the opposite sex in a platonic relationship, the words ‘남자사이친구 [namjahsaichingu] and 여자사이친구 [yeojasaichingu]’ are used. However, these long phrases are almost always contracted to ‘남사친 [namsachin] and 여사친 [yeosachin]’, essentially meaning a guy or girl who is a friend, but with whom one is not in a romantic relationship. These phrases were also coined recently in order to describe more accurately changing relations in modern Korean society.
- 7) A few amusing but slightly disparaging phrases to describe someone who seems to fall in love inappropriately are 얼빠 [eolb^hah] and 금사빠 [geumsahb^hah]. The former stands for ‘잘생긴 얼굴에 빠지는 사람 [jalsengin eolguleh b^hahjineun saram], which insinuates someone falling in love over just a pretty face. The latter means ‘금방 사랑에 빠지는 사람 [geumbang sarangeh b^hahjineun saram]’; insinuating that one quickly falls in love, typically at first sight. These new phrases were coined within the past decade and are often used online in mass media²¹.
- 8) Korea embraces a prominent culture of drinking with friends or coworkers. Not surprisingly, words such as ‘알쓰 [alseu]’ describes one

who is unable to handle large amounts of alcohol. This word is a contraction of the Korean transliteration of the English word alcohol ‘알코올 [alko’ol]’. Though different from both the pure Korean word for alcohol ‘술 [sul]’ and the Chinese loan word ‘저장 (酒精) [jeojang]’, it was the English transliteration that, when combined with the word for trash in Korean, ‘쓰레기 [sseulaegi]’, created this new phrase³¹.

9) When someone is not reading or purposely ignoring text messages, the contraction ‘읽씹 [igsship]’ from ‘읽기 씹다 [ilgi sshipda]’ perfectly captures such a situation. Breaking this phrase down, ‘읽 [ilg]’ means ‘to read’ while the original meaning of ‘씹 [sship]’ is actually the root of the verb ‘to chew’³¹. In this context, however, ‘씹 [sship]’ changes its meaning to ‘ignore’, whereas the original verb for ‘to ignore’ is ‘무시하다 [mushihada]’³¹.

10) Popular in Korean culture is the company dinner, or ‘회식 [hwaesik]’. This popular word usually connotes office workers getting together after work to share a meal, drink alcohol, and forget life’s difficulties. The word was originally meant to describe people gathering to eat ‘회식 (會食) [hwaesik]’, but it gained a new meaning when it became a contraction

with the same pronunciation. Today, the ‘회식 (聚餐) [hwaesik]’, as suggested by its roots ‘회사 [hwaesa]’ meaning company and ‘식사 [siksa]’ meaning meal – both of which are old Chinese loan words themselves, is almost always associated with company dinners³¹.

11) One borrowed word, ‘아르바이트 [areubaiteu]’, originally comes from the German word *arbeit*, meaning work. Adapted into Korean from the Japanese loanword which in turn came from German, the word came to describe students who had to work for pocket money while still studying – partly due to the difficult economy of the time. Today, younger generations still use this term to describe part-time jobs, calling them ‘알바 [alba]’ for short²⁴.

12) In modern Korea’s high stress culture, phrases like ‘이번 생은 망했다 [eebeon sengeun manghetda]’, meaning that one has ruined their life, are commonly found contracted to ‘이생망 [eesengmang]’. This phrase was coined by newer generations in Korea who have grown up in a highly competitive society and where self-esteem is low⁷.

13) Saying “of course” in Korean is ‘당연 [dangyeon]’. This word is similar in pronunciation to the word for carrot ‘당근 [dangeun]’, and as such,

some substitute the vegetable for agreement⁸. This alteration first seemed to take place in computer chat rooms. The reasons for this change were twofold. First, the roots to both words are similar – both start with the syllable ‘당 [dang]’. Secondly, it is easier, and perhaps more amusing, to say phonetically ‘당근 [dangeun]’ as opposed to ‘당연 [dangyeon]’³⁰.

14) As Korean media is disseminated around the globe through the Hallyu (한류) movements, contractions like ‘한드 [handeu]’ are colloquial phrases and contractions meaning Korean drama: ‘한국드라마 [hanguk deurama]’⁸.

Another unique development among younger generations is the penchant for misspelling words in order to mimic the pronunciation more closely. The intended pronunciation aligns itself well with the Korean ‘cute’ culture (애교 [aegyo] {爱校}) as younger generations think such spellings more closely relate to the pronunciation of certain words when the speaker wants to portray oneself as cute. This culture, which started appearing right before the start of the twentieth century, encourages and idolizes an innocent and cute persona. Such an image often demands not only certain actions deemed cute, but also stresses certain ways of speech which can linguistically be described as stopping fricative consonant sounds, reducing the

number of syllables in certain words, and replacing lower toned vowels with higher toned ones. This, in effect, makes the speaker's voice appear more child-like, enforcing the stereotype of innocence. It is a common phenomenon not only among young Koreans, but also among both male and female K-pop groups who use the 'aegyo' to promote themselves and gain more fans³⁹. The rise of the 'aegyo' culture has led to some unique variations in spoken Korean²⁹. Below are common examples of how this phenomenon has altered the pronunciation of common words in an effort to bend the 'aegyo' culture into everyday speech. The pronunciation is provided in brackets for comparison between the two versions.

- 1) In contrast to the typical greeting '안녕 [anyeong]', cuter ways to say this include '안녕 [anyong]' and '안녕 [anyoong]'.
- 2) When agreeing, instead of using the word '응' [eung] (yes / sure), '응' [oong] is used to sound more playful.
- 3) In order to relieve the brusqueness of a straight yes ('네' [ne/de]), Koreans often add extra letters at the end of that syllable. Common added letters include 'ㅂ' [letter whose phonetic value is 'b/p'] and the letter 'ㅇ' [letter whose phonetic value is a final '-ng'] to create '넵' [ne^b] and '녕' [neng], respectively²⁹.

- 4) Adding the consonant ‘ㅇ [final ‘~ng’]’ to the last syllable of any word indicates an inflection in one’s tone that is interpreted as a cute way to address or speak. This also can be used to informalize formal conjugations of verb endings. An example is ‘~용’ [yong] (informal polite ending ‘~요’ [yo])^{1,29}.
- 5) Another trend in rendering formal verb endings less formal includes the imperative ending ‘~십시오 [si^pshi o]’ being reduced to ‘~십시오 [si^pshyo]’.
- 6) Often, the two syllable word for ‘too much’ (너무 [Neomu]) is condensed into one syllable by dropping the last vowel, making ‘넘 [neom].
- 7) In Korean grammar, the ‘ㅁ/음 [m]’ consonant is used to change a verb into a noun such as 모이다 [Moida] (to gather) to become 모임 [moim] (a gathering). Recently, adding a ‘ㅁ [m]’ to any verb becomes a shortened form for a conditional clause. For example, instead of writing ‘했으면 [haeseumyeon] (if *subject* did), one would simply write ‘했음 [haeseum] or 해썬 [haeseum].
- 8) Additionally, this contraction can be used to shorten, and thus make formal verb conjugations more informal. Should the formal language be written and spoken as ‘했습니다 [haeseumnida] (*subject* did)’, the same

pronunciation would be attained by writing ‘했음 [haeseum] (*subject did*)’ and deleting the ‘~니다 [nida]’ ending¹.

9) Many common words in Korean end with a ‘일 [il]’, indicating ‘day’ or ‘work’. Many speakers, moreover, shorten words like ‘제일 (Best [chaeil])’, ‘내일 (tomorrow [naeil])’, and ‘요일 (day of week [yoil])’ to form one syllable counterparts such as ‘쩨 [chael]’, ‘널 [nael]’, and ‘욘 [yol]’.

10) When asking for something, it is not uncommon to write the verb to give, ‘주다 [jooda]’ in its informal conjugation ‘줘요’ [jwuh yol]. However, the ‘ㅜ [wuh]’ is a lower tone vowel whose pronunciation is comparable to the higher toned vowel ‘ㅓ’ [o]. Thus, the former is often replaced with the latter to be cuter.

11) When apologizing between friends, the informal ‘미안 [miahn]’ is commonly used. However, a cuter, popular alternate spelling is ‘미얀 [miyahn]’, which more closely mimics the actual pronunciation.

Several new words have been born out of combining the effects of the ‘aegyo’ culture and the tendency to shorten phrases as to be faster in everything. Since the

‘aegyo’ culture tends to emphasize beauty and cuteness, such words and phrases often pertain to one’s style and beauty, such as the following examples:

- 1) The phrase ‘간지 nada [kanji nada]’ is originally from the Japanese word ‘感じ [kanji]’ which means style or atmosphere. Koreans borrowed this term to mean someone having an attractive look. Indeed, it may have been borrowed from Japan’s ‘kawaii’ culture which is comparable to the Korean ‘aegyo’⁸.
- 2) The word ‘쌍얼 [S^haengeol]’ is a combination of the Chinese character for life ‘生 [shēng]’ and the first syllable ‘얼 [eol]’ of pure Korean word for face, ‘얼굴 [eolgul]’. Together, the ‘生 [shēng]’ and the ‘얼 [eol]’ combine to make ‘쌍얼 [S^haengeol]’. This implies a face that looks beautiful and pretty without makeup, which would be the ideal ‘aegyo’ character.⁸
- 3) The word ‘얼짱 [eoljjang]’, similar to the previous example, takes its first syllable from the same word for face in Korean – ‘얼굴 [eolgul]’. The second syllable, ‘짱 [jjang]’ translates to ‘awesome’ or ‘cool’. Putting these syllables together, one gets a word that means an awesome, or beautiful face, which is also a goal of the ‘aegyo’ culture⁸.

급식체

The Internet's most unique influence on spoken Korean is perhaps the rise of young people's slang called '급식체 [geupsikchae]'. This type of speech is the singular combination of Korean, Japanese, Chinese, English, and occasionally French and German words in addition to those countries' cultural identities in order to make a play on words, create new rhymes in songs, craft puns, and make parodies concerning a specific topic³³. Since there are no direct translations of this kind of language into English and since one needs both cultural and linguistic knowledge of the countries and cultures listed above, translating these expressions for a different audience is rather problematic. Below are several of the most popular examples of this slang.

- 1) The word '인지용 [injiyong]' simply describes agreement or consent. The first syllable (인 [in]) is the first syllable of '인정 [injeong]', which is the actual noun for 'agreement'. The second syllable '지 [ji]' not only shares the common consonant 'ㅈ' with the second syllable of '인정 [injeong]', but is also the conjugation form indicating the listener's agreement '~지요 [ji yo]'. The final syllable '용 [yong]' is a polite but 'cute' way to approve

of something. Thus, all the syllables in ‘인지용 [injiyong]’ indicate agreement, but all pull from different aspects of the Korean language⁷.

- 2) To describe good luck, the word ‘개이득 [gae eedeuk]’ is used. The ‘개 [gae]’ actually means dog, but is used as hyperbole to make things seem greater or “cooler” than they actually are. Thus, when combined with the word for gain and profit ‘이득 [eedeuk]’, one gets ‘개이득 [gae eedeuk]’, meaning excellent fortune⁶.
- 3) In young people’s slang, good feelings are expressed by ‘앙기모띠 [anggimodil]’. The word is of Japanese origin for happy feelings ‘気持ちいい [kimochi]’. This expression gained popularity from YouTube channels and Japanese adult entertainment stars^{6,28}.
- 4) To express inability, the mixed phrase ‘빼박퀀트 [B^heh ba^k kehnteu]’ comes from ‘빼도 박도 못하는 can’t [B^heh do ba^kdo motaneun can’t]’. It can be roughly translated to mean to take something out, to crash something, or to be unable to do something⁶. The idea behind this phrase is to express impossibility.

- 5) In order to describe something great or awesome, Koreans employ the verb ‘오지다 [ohjida]’. This construction was first used by students in the 2010s⁷.
- 6) To express excitement in leaving or going somewhere, Koreans commonly use the construction ‘가즈아 [gajeu-a]’. In contrast to its shorter and grammatically correct form of ‘가자 [kaja]’, using ‘가즈아 [gajeu-a]’ gives the impression of excitement, similar to saying ‘let’s goooo’ in English⁷.

Even within young people’s slang, there are different kinds of categories. One such includes the 야민정음 [Yaminjeongum], in which the original consonant–vowel combination of Korean letters is replaced by other consonant–vowel combinations that either look similar to the original spelling or whose stroke order and position matches both the original and new combinations¹⁵. In essence, users of this kind of slang are purposefully misspelling their words, usually to the consternation of older generations. Most of the changes discussed below are not confined to one or two words provided in the example.

- 1) The word for cute is ‘귀엽다 [gwiyupda]’, but the shape of the first syllable closely mimics that of ‘커엽다 [keoyupda]’. This changes the pronunciation from the original [gwiyupda] to [keoyupda].
- 2) The prefix ‘대(大) [dae]’ means big or large. However, this consonant–vowel combination resembles ‘머 [meo]’. As an example, instead of the phrase ‘Republic of Korea’ being written as ‘대한민국 [daehanminguk]’, it is written and pronounced like ‘머한민국 [meohanminguk]’. The meaning remains the same, however.
- 3) The original spelling and pronunciation for fruit is ‘과일 [gwail]’. Since the first syllable ‘과 [gwa]’ resembles the shape of ‘파 [pa]’, some transform the ‘과 [gwa]’ into ‘파 [pa]’. This creates ‘파일 [pa-il]’ and despite the major pronunciation change, the meaning remains untouched. Other examples include ‘과로 [gwaro]’, meaning ‘overwork’ being changed to ‘파로 [paro]’.
- 4) As the two syllables ‘비 [bi]’ and ‘네 [ne]’ look alike, they have become interchangeable. When the proper spelling calls for ‘비 [bee]’, replacing that syllable with ‘네 [ne]’ becomes common. The same is true for the opposite. An example is Korea’s popular internet portal, NAVER, which

is spelled not only like ‘네이버 [nae ee beo]’, but also like ‘비이버 [bee ee beo]’.

- 5) Occasionally, combinations of consonants and vowels allow one to write two syllables in place of one. A popular example is ‘쫘’, is a single syllable combination of the two separate syllables ‘존쫘 [jonjo]’. This, in turn, is a contraction of ‘존나 쫘다 [jonna jotta]’, translating to a rather unrefined interpretation of ‘very delicious’.
- 6) This interchanging has touched even politics. While this slang is usually done only by young generations, it grew in popularity during protests against South Korean president Park Geun Hye. Protesters turned the middle syllable of Park Geun Hye’s (박근혜) name ‘근 [geun]’ to the singular but resembling letter of ‘ㄹ [letter whose phonetic value is ‘l’]’, creating ‘박ㄹ혜 [Bak ‘L’ Hye]’³². As names are cherished in Korean society, this action was very likely done as an insult.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the effects of the Internet and modern age, especially the effects on spoken Korean. Modern trends in the spoken and written language tend to lean towards a rudimental and faster way to communicate the most

information possible with a certain regard for correct grammar, pronunciation, and spelling.

The modern age and rise of technology have affected both spoken and written Korean in many diverse ways. From alternate spellings to new abbreviations and from new slang to entirely different genres of colloquial speech, Korean remains a diverse and dynamic language that will continue to evolve.

CONCLUSION OF THESIS

This thesis has provided an overview of 500 years of spoken Korean evolution. From archeologists attempting to piece together old Korean during the three kingdoms era to the critical invention of the Korean alphabet and the beginning of the in modern period, there have been many influences on the peninsula's spoken language. In addition to the influx of loanwords from both western and eastern languages, the more recent trends in the spoken evolution revolve around telecommunications and the Internet as new words and slang expressions are born.

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