

# The 'Borrowing' of English: How the Korean Lexicon Will Be Forever Evolving

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## Abstract

*Korean society and language are under a continual alteration in regards to their social, cultural, economic and political life. With the ever increasing emphasis placed on the population to become communicatively competent in a foreign language, predominantly English, by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the domestic conglomerates, the phenomenon of borrowing English lexicon will surely advance unabated. As well, accompanying the influences of the MOE and the conglomerates is the fact that South Koreans themselves are becoming much more globalised and outward looking than they have ever been in their entire history as a nation with increased travel and more opportunities to encounter foreigners within the nation. Having come into contact with native English speakers has fostered the process of borrowing lexicon and influencing the internal linguistic development.*

## Introduction

Throughout history, when individuals from differing tribes (nations) came into contact with one another, the basis of communication employed was in all likelihood cumbersome and fraught with miscommunication. In not having the ability to comprehend or produce each others' vernacular, individuals either had to learn the native tongue of their interlocutors or had to instruct their interlocutors in their own native tongue. Over time, due to these contacts and having learnt others' vernaculars, these individuals have greatly enhanced not only their own native language but also those of their contacts. By developing the means to communicate with one another in a comprehensible manner while understanding of each other's ideas, thoughts, and cultures, individuals in part have led themselves, their fellow countrymen and their societies as a whole to greater place in the world today, where not a single language cannot be understood and everyone now has a voice that does not only speak to a select few from one's tribe, but to the whole world. "Language is not a tool to which people manifest their thoughts, cultural norms, and society in general. Where a language comes into contact with another language, not only are words transmitted unilaterally or bilaterally, cultures as well are transmitted" (Lee, 2007).

Any given language in this world, at some point in time of its existence has been or will be modified to some extent, after having come into contact with individuals speaking different languages. To what extent the influence other languages will have on one's native language will vary, due in part to the numerous variables that are connected to a nation's and an individual's linguistic development. "A tremendous clash of value systems is brought to bear on the ultimate decision: linguistic diversity, cultural pluralism, ethnicity, race, power, status, politics, economics, and the list goes on" (Brown, 2000, p. 195). Languages are continually being modified and developed according to their user's needs, and as Lehman (1967) believes, "there can never be a moment of true standstill in language, just as little as in the ceaseless flaming thought of men. By nature it is a continuous process of development" (p. 33). One of the greatest and most common methods that languages continue to modify and develop themselves is through the natural process of 'borrowing' lexicon from other languages, done so to satisfy the needs of a given language at that present time (Sapir, 1921).

This natural phenomenon of 'borrowing' has been taking place for centuries, the imparting of one's native language's lexicon onto another, and vice versa, can be seen throughout the history of mankind, dependant on the world conditions of the day. In studying borrowed words or 'loan-words', as they are commonly referred to, they may be "called the milestones of philology, because in a great many instances they permit us to fix approximately the dates of linguistic changes" (Jespersen, 1956, p. 27).

Currently, in South Korea, the Korean lexicon is developing at a feverish pace, thanks in part to the borrowing of words, predominantly from the English language. These new borrowed words can readily be found in the Korean cursive of Hangul, on and in all matters of printed material that include signs, posters, menus and daily periodicals. Also, when viewing Korean television programs, a plethora of these borrowed words can now be heard in the everyday lexicon of the program's dialogue. It is the aim of this paper to investigate the reasons as to how the English language began having such a profound effect on the Korean lexicon and the implications that the borrowing will have not only for the Korean people, but also the nation as a whole. As well, whenever languages may be deemed to be under threat of their existence by other languages, which some believe the Korean language to be, the ideas of language purism, particularly Korean language purism, and linguistic imperialism are essential to the discussion and will be addressed in the pages to follow.

## **Korean language development until 1945**

Korea is certainly a unique country in the world. Due to its geographical location of being sandwiched between the two mighty powers of China and Japan, it has for a great deal of its history been derided by both of these nations as being nothing more than a frontier to claim for their own'. As history has shown, the peninsula of Korea has been forever in conflict to preserve its independence from these two nations. Having to constantly be in the position of fending off being conquered completely by both of these nations, Korea has had extensive interaction in many areas with them. Even though the nation had not been overthrown completely in terms of being assimilated into the other nation, they were however conquered to a certain degree in regards to economics, culture and politics. Thus, as Knowles (1997) points out, "Conquest by foreign invaders is inevitably followed by the introduction of the languages of the invaders" (p. 3).

In being the case that the Korean nation has been under constant threat of being conquered, it has never really developed a true distinct vernacular or lexicon of its own right, other than a limited one, until very recently by the North Koreans. The influence that these two nations have had on the Korean vernacular cannot be underestimated, particularly the influence of Mandarin Chinese. From Korea's inception and until the present day, Chinese orthography and their corresponding words have played a critical role in the Korean vernacular. Sino-Korean words, words that have been derived from Chinese, by most estimates make up between fifty to sixty percent of modern Korean vernacular (Lovmo, 2007).

The reason for this vast amount of "borrowing" is that the language of the people that is viewed as the centre of culture is more influential on the language of its neighbours (Sapir, 1921), and to Korea, over several millennia, this culture was Chinese. (Lee, 2007)

With the majority of the Korean language being derived from Chinese, Korea was not merely impacted linguistically but also socio-culturally. Being a Confucist culture, where strict social lines are drawn, and the belief that one's social position determines their status within the society, the ability to understand and use the complex Chinese orthography enabled persons to increase their social ranking. "One illustration of the sociocultural influence would be the induction of the civil service exam, which allowed people (even commoners) the opportunity to gain access to more powerful and influential positions in society" (Lee, 2007).

In viewing the Chinese language as a tool to uplift oneself to higher position within their community, a 'prestige' value had been placed upon the language. "The concept of 'prestige', as found in discussion about language in use, is typically understood in terms of overt prestige, that is, the generally recognized 'better' or positively valued ways of speaking in social communities" (Yule, 1996, p. 240). That being the case, a greater emphasis for learning the given foreign language and in turn a greater amount of lexicon was borrowed. Hock and Joseph (1996) believe that the greater the degree of prestige that a society or individual places upon a language, directly impacts the amount and types of lexicon that are borrowed. As has been witnessed and proven, the majority of the modern South Korean lexicon is rooted in Mandarin Chinese.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Korean language once again began to be morphed, not only from forces outside the country, but also from within it. With Chinese influence over Korea waning, and the rise of the Japanese empire's influence on peninsula, Korea was once again embroiled in a fight for its own sovereignty, eventually becoming occupied and succeeding power to the Japanese empire. In the early stages of the Japanese occupation, the Korean language was largely untouched by the handlers of the country and thus remained in its previous state other than some new phrases and words being adopted from Japanese. This may be attributed to not only the Japanese policy to

leave the language untouched, but also from the great resentment and hatred the Korean people had developed over the centuries for the Japanese due to their many conflicts and now their occupation of the country itself. Thus the impact of the Japanese language on Korean was limited. As time passed however, "A great number of Japanese words began being used, especially after 1938, when the colonial government switched from a bilingual policy to a Japanese-only policy" (Lovmo, 2007). Given the chaotic social environment that the Korean peninsula encountered at the turn of the century and the dominance of Japanese control intensifying, the feeling among many Koreans was that their language was in the inauspicious position of being eliminated (Park, 1989). The dominant circumstance that led Koreans to judge such an ominous decline to their language was the fact that the Japanese colonial authority shifted their language policies in Korea from a bilingual approach to one where all education and official government communication was to be strictly undertaken in Japanese. With education, bureaucratic correspondence and periodicals/dailies now strictly employing the Japanese language, an influx of lexicon was introduced and adopted into the Korean language as Sino-Japanese words. Such a development was inevitable as, "the most common development in contact situations is a process called BORROWING, the adoption and adaptation of words from one language to another" (Hock and Joseph, 1996, p. 14). That was precisely the case for the Korean language: with Koreans having greater contact with the Japanese language in schools, workplaces and general everyday communications, a marked degree of borrowing followed.

This decision by the Japanese colonial authority along with the drive among Koreans for independence, aided the advancement that many wished to happen and that "the development of Korean as a national language" (Park, 1898, p. 116), as well to the establishment and legitimacy of the language purism movement that increasingly became more prominent at that time and still is relatively active today.

With the peninsula being divided into North and South after WWII, and independence now a reality, two separate beliefs in language policy became present. For North Korea, their belief rested in their controlled 'Eradication of Illiteracy' movements which aimed to completely eliminate the usage of Chinese orthography (Kumatami, 1990) and to be replaced by the far easier to learn Hangul alphabet. Akin to the language purists in the South who proposed the same policy, the rationale of the North Korean regime can be attributed to their belief that because "Hangul can be mastered in a matter of hours or, at most, days, while learning to use enough Chinese characters normally takes years of hard work" (Park, 1989, pp. 129-130), their goal to eradicate illiteracy among the populace would be achieved. Along with this policy, the Northern regime's intended strategy was for the eventual elimination of all traces of Chinese orthography, Sino-Korean, Sino-Japanese and any other borrowed lexicon that may have been present, to be replaced with original Korean words, often "contrived pure Korean coinages" (Park, 1989, p. 137). In all likelihood, having achieved their goal, the Korean language of today in North Korea, may be viewed as the only truly unique and original pure Korean language. The endeavour undertaken by the North Korean regime is in line with their 'Juche' belief system, the 'spirit of self-reliance', developed by Kim Il-sung, that calls for the elimination of all things foreign. In addition, as Chinese was viewed by the regime as an elitist language used only by the aristocrats, due to its difficulty in learning, it was considered as "property of only a few, [and as] ... feudalistic" (Song, 1994, p.208) which was not in line with the quasi-communist North Korean belief system.

Unlike their North Korean counterparts, the bureaucrats and intelligentsia in the South took a contrary approach to their neighbours in the development of the Korean language learnt and practiced. While both nations believed that such a "large scale 'intrusion' of words from other languages is regarded with alarm ..., posing a threat to the purity and security of the Korean language" (Park, 1989, p. 117), the South's belief of purifying the language of unwanted foreign lexicon was far less extreme. However, in regards to the 'borrowed' Japanese lexicon that was embedded into the Korean language during the period of occupation, both Koreans were vehement that this new borrowed lexicon must be eradicated and such words and phrases "were a particular target of purification efforts" (Lovmo, 2007), even though elements of which it persist until today in the South, particularly among the elder generations that recall growing up learning Japanese.

In adjudging the Sino-Korean words derived from Chinese and Chinese orthography, for the most part, the majority of those in the south felt and determined that to eliminate such a vast amount of lexicon from the language would also signify a loss of cultural identity that had developed over the centuries. These forces amongst the populace whom opposed the purist language movement body, like the Hangul Society in the South, believed that "the nation should not break its ties with its classical literature and traditional culture, which for better or worse, are more tied to Chinese orthography than Hangul" (Lovmo, 2007). Thus, in South Korea, even after independence from both Chinese and Japanese influence over their nation, the language changes that took place were minimal at best and the ver-

naacular that was accepted and used for centuries continued to be accepted, rather than an attempt to purge the language of borrowed Japanese lexicon. Even until the present day, the usage of both Sino-Korean words and Chinese orthography persists; yet, Chinese orthography is gradually losing the strength and relevance that it once held among society.

## The Rise of English since 1945

The role of English as a vernacular used by an ever escalating populace around the world and why it has become so, can be evidenced in what Jansen (2002) suggested:

English was well-established due to the efforts of the British Empire. Secondly, the U.S. gained a leading role in technology, economy, and politics in the first part of the twentieth century and still remains that status. Thirdly, the development of industry, communication, and international relations in the twentieth century needed a common language, and English was there to fill the need. (pp. 260-261)

But unlike the colonial nations of the British Empire, the English language had an insignificant impact upon the peoples of Korea until the Japanese and then the United States became directly ensconced in the domestic affairs taking place within the peninsula.

With two major events occurring within the five year period from 1945-1950, the division of the peninsula into North and South, and the beginning of the Korean war, the Korean vernacular was once again and continues to be 'under attack' or 'evolving', whichever perspective one perceives. The alteration of the vernacular from this time forward can be directly attributed to the American presence in both events and their continued presence, both diplomatically and economically. Like the rest of the world after the Second World War, Korea learnt to accept that "the United States assumed the leading role after 1945 as a consequence of its military strength as well as its economic might" (Lee, 2007). For Korea however, the impact of the American influence and English has been far greater than that of other nations based on the still unresolved war with the North and their continued presence in the country, making it a truly unique case.

In the South Korea of today, the impact that English has had upon the society since independence in 1945, cannot be underestimated. A major link that has helped spawn the advancement and growth in the usage of English is directly related to the educational policies that have been adopted by the Ministry of Education (MOE) over the years. English language classes have been a required course of study throughout the middle and high school curriculums for decades and beginning in 1998, from the third grade of primary school. Even though the method of instruction in said English courses has not focused on the communicative aspects of the language, but rather on the grammatical, morphological and syntactic aspects, a great deal of the English language has transuded into the everyday vernacular of the Korean language. The correlation being that it has been suggested that up to ninety percent of all new borrowed lexicon that is consumed into the South Korean vernacular of today is drawn from English (Tranter, 1997). Baik and Shim (1998) believe that "original English words are becoming increasingly more common than Chinese – character loan words and that there is a preference for English loanwords over native Korean words" (p. 275).

A further leading ingredient that has influenced the increased usage of borrowed English lexicon in South Korea may be attributed to the fact that since the late 1980's, the populace has become far more international in their outlook due to their now afforded ability to travel internationally, a right that was limited until then, thus increasing their contacts with the peoples of the world and creating a need for communication in the now accepted world language of English. In essence, South Korea has been moving away from the traditional culture that it once was to one that is considerably more modern and outward looking. Instead of leaning on the traditional practices that had survived for centuries in guiding their life, South Koreans have developed new needs that do not reflect on their traditional life, forcing them to accept new manners in the way one lives one's life, which includes a new form of communication.

In traditional societies, people expect their own lives to follow a similar course to those of their parents; but in late modern societies the pace and extent of social change means that the experience of older generations does not provide a model for the children (Cameron, 2002, pp. 75-76).

What Cameron states certainly is the case for the children in the modern Korean of today. The pace at which South Korea has transformed itself from a nation that was considered among one of the poorest in the world as early as 1953, to one where it now has the thirteenth largest economy in the

world, has meant many dramatic social changes have occurred during this period. For the generations that grew up during the rapid industrialization of the nation and the toils and hardships that they had to endure during this period, has led many of them to insist and pressure their children to undertake a life that is greatly dissimilar and less physically demanding than that what they faced in their childhood. And along this path of industrialization, South Korea has now transformed, to a great extent, from a nation that was man-powered based to one based on knowledge and the mind.

In being the case, the typical South Korean parent has dramatically altered the mindset of their children and overall, the nation as a whole. As Cameron (2002) points out, "whereas the industrial economy required large numbers of manual workers, who were colloquially referred to as 'hands' and whose language skills were seen as largely irrelevant, the new capitalism is different" (p.72). The new capitalism taking place within South Korea bears this out: gone are the 'hand' industries that once dominated the economy and Korea's rapid expansion; replacing them is the greatest resource that the nation fosters today, the 'brain' industry.

This new 'brain' industrial movement taking place in South Korea has proved to be a forcible clog into the advancement of English in the nation. Until the mid-1990s, the IT industry was for the most part under developed and had very little impact on the daily lives of most people. However, slightly before the Asian financial crisis in 1997 that delivered a debilitating blow to the economy, the framework had been put in place to develop the industry in order to re-shift the working sector from a 'hands' workforce to a 'brain' one. With the rise of this industry, particularly during the Kim Dae-Jung administration from 1998-2003, the heavily invested sectors of both publicly and privately corporations began to flourish and transform the economic endeavours of companies, in addition to metamorphosing the social landscape that until then had remained in pretty well a constant state for generations. The financial crisis in essence forced the large conglomerates (i.e. Samsung, Hyundai, Kia, LG) to re-organize their business perspectives and plans that relied heavily on the domestic market to ones where they needed to begin expanding and developing their international operations. In doing so, the refocusing of priorities began to place a greater burden on the workforce to develop new skills and in particular, their foreign language (FL) communicative abilities.

These three major catalysts (IT industry, MOE, conglomerates) as well as a more outward looking society as a whole has once again altered the Korean vernacular at a break-neck pace and one which does not seem to be losing any steam. These corridors that have proved influential and have enveloped South Korean society, have aided a foreign language learning frenzy that has produced a multi-billion dollar industry with the emphasis being placed on the learning of English for communicative purposes rather than the age-old practices of Grammar-translation (GT) and Audiolingualism (AL) that have been predominantly utilized for language instruction until quite recently. Being taught by such approaches has left several generations of Koreans with the inability to communicate effectively when exposed to the 'real' outside world (outside the classroom) and all the diverse situations that the outside world presents. However, due to the importance being put on FL learners by the major catalysts, a major rethinking of why they are studying the FL of English has been taking place, not only by the individual learner, but also the entire nation as a whole. According to Nunan (2003), "an important influence on the course of language teaching was a rethinking of the nature of language itself. Rather than being viewed as a set of linguistic systems, it was seen as a tool for communication" (p. 157). This is precisely the rethinking that is now and has been taking place among South Korea FL learners. Having finally come to the realization that "language is for communication" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 130) and that even though they may have linguistic competence, it does not necessarily transcend them to being communicatively competent, which is precisely the skill that now is required of them in today's world. However, with a new enlightened perspective, "In 2001, the Ministry of Education adopted a policy of teaching English through English, which encourages the use of English in English classes" (Nunan, 2003, p. 601). The MOE's adoption of said policy was fostered by the new developments taking place within the society thanks in part to the catalysts mentioned previously and to a great extent from the FL learners themselves, whose frustrations of not 'knowing how' to use the language and questioning of why exactly are they studying a language if they cannot use it functionally.

Not only do learners have a reluctance to cover familiar ground for the second and third time, they have, in fact, reached a stage in their studies when they may no longer be able to benefit from the oral, inductive type of teaching employed at a more elementary level. (Allen & Widdowson, 1979, p. 132)

Allen and Widdowson's observation holds validity for most South Korean FL learners who have laboured through the study of linguistic functions for years and emphasize the need for educators to provide new forms of instruction that captivate and draw the learner's attention to the practical usage

of the language, not just the linguistic aspect. “An accuracy-based curriculum is by definition a deficit curriculum for students, because it does not start from what the student does” (Brumfit, 1979, p. 188). As the language polices in South Korea have been in a continual progression towards the promotion of communicative competence, as can be evidenced today, the learners themselves have now become more encouraged and engaged in wanting to engross in dialogue, to the point that they are now discovering that “one linguistic form can fulfil a variety of communicative functions, and one function can be fulfilled by a variety of linguistic forms” (Widdowson, 1979, p. 119). All of this is in stark contrast to the typical Korean FL learning environment of yesteryear that failed to captivate the students thoughts, and is best explained by Tarone and Yule’s (1989) description most common for second language (SL) and FL around the world and which depicts quite accurately what has been transpiring in South Korean FL classrooms for decades.

Learners are used to an educational setting in which teachers overtly control the activities of the group in a relatively formal manner, emphasize the memorization of grammatical rules of vocabulary, often via mechanical procedures such as repetition and rote learning, administer frequent achievement tests, and generally require their students to maintain a passive and subordinate role. (p. 9)

Because language is in a constant state of fluctuation due to “the continual demands of new discoveries and new technologies” (Orr, 1998), learners are required to adapt and fluctuate their learning with the given new advancements, something South Koreans have embraced fully.

The monumental changes (i.e. IT industry advancement, outward looking domestic corporations and educational policies) that have been eluded to have influenced on a massive scale the altering of everyday lexicon within the nation. As was highlighted previously, up to ninety percent of all new borrowed lexicons in Korean come from English. To see examples of such English language usage, one does not need to look very far. A simple walk to the corner store is enough to witness the impact it has had, by observing the signage on the street and the language used in the packaging of goods in the shops and advertising. However, for the common international visitor to the nation or even Koreans themselves to a large extent, the amount of English usage that is actually practiced due to the words and phrases being written in the Hangul cursive. But if one was to take an hour and become somewhat competent in the reading of Hangul, a whole new world of discovery as to the vast amount of English that is readily employed in the everyday Korean vernacular would be astonishing (see appendix 1). In addition, if one had the ability to comprehend Korean dialogue, an individual would quickly discern a large number of English lexicons in use, however, with a Korean pronunciation of them or exploited in a rather awkward manner, which is commonly referred to as Konglish, an example being: binyl house in reference to green house. Such changes are not uncommon of borrowed lexicon, for in any language transference that occurs in the process of nativization, lexicon go through phonological, morphological, and semantic transformation that can sometimes prove unrecognizable to the native English speaker. The English lexicon in Korean is transfixed using the various methods of lexicon transformation including: compounding, blending, clipping, backformation and conversion, not unlike other languages around the world.

In the utilization or replacement of Korean lexicon with English borrowed words, the concept of ‘prestige’ is once again revisited. No longer are Chinese orthography and Sino-Korean lexicon seen as a way to empower oneself to a greater societal position. Having been replaced by English in the last sixty years due to the world events economically, technologically, sociologically and politically, Koreans have accepted the fact that in today’s modern world structure, one of the - if not the most - influential manners in which an individual empowers oneself within their sphere of the world is through the usage of English as means in which to communicate. “Habits of language – such as dress, diet, and gesture – have themselves been categorized as prestigious or non-prestigious habits and the prestigious habits of one generation have become arbitrary conventions of the next” (Knowles, 1997, p. 5). Due to such a great influence that Koreans have placed on being competent in English, both communicatively and competently, “the increasing number of loanwords that are assimilated into Korean is doing more than affecting the linguistic system, they are affecting the psyche, culture, and society of those Koreans” (Lee, 2007). Not a day goes by that an article in the press, a new government educational policy or a new private business decision is reported regarding the usage of language within the nation. In that being the case, only heightens the virtues associated with being competent in English among the populace, thus perpetrating the ‘prestige’ value and driving the FL learning environment into a frenzy.

## Linguistic Imperialism

It would appear to some, particularly language purists that the forces driving the increasing usage of English within Korea, are guaranteeing the extinction of the Korean language or placing it under considerable threat thanks in part to the vast increases of borrowed English words now in use in the daily Korean language. Such a belief raises the argument that is quite a controversial topic among ESL/EFL academics today: an individual's and nation's linguistic rights within the theoretical framework of linguistic imperialism. According to Phillipson (1997), who is a staunch advocate and leading theorist of linguistic rights and imperialism, "linguistic imperialism is a theoretical construct, devised to account for linguistic hierarchisation, to address issues of why some languages come to be more used and others less, what structures and ideologies facilitate such processes" (p. 238).

For the most part, the theoretical construct of linguistic imperialism attempts to highlight the impact that the English language is having on the local dialects around the world. The English language has emerged as the language that is now dominant in usage for a vast amount of domains (Wallace, 2002), particularly since the end of the Second World War and the rise in influence of the United States, having taken over from England. While everyone will agree that English has become the dominant and exclusive language around the world, Wallace (2002) points out, "it should be emphasized that there is nothing inherent in English as a language which makes it more suitable than any other language for this role" (p. 106). One could say that it just happened to be in the right place and the right time due to the economic, political, and sociological factors that have developed over the last century. With at least half the world's population now being able to communicate in English, either as a native speaker or an L2 speaker (an amount double that of native speakers), the need for a discussion and theorization of linguistic imperialism is easy to conceptualize.

A prevalent theme, if not the most so, that persists in the theoretical construct of linguistic imperialism is that language is a human right. Such a belief is commonly espoused and is the starting point for theorists of this construct like that of Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1995) who state that: "linguistic rights are one type of human rights and as such are intricately interlocking element in a set of inalienable, universal norms for just enjoyment of one's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights" (p. 483). While this argument may be true and hold validity in nations where English has been accepted as an official language of a nation (i.e. Singapore, Nigeria), in the case of South Korea or any other nation that has not given English official status, yet interacts with the native language in complex ways, it would appear that such a statement is groundless in these particular cases for the simple fact that the study of and the utilization of English in discourse remains for all intents and purposes, an individuals' choice rather than a right. In general, as pertains to linguistic human rights (LHRs),

The notion of LHRs, then, revolves around the relationship between particular minority groups and their associated mother tongues; it attempts to ensure that the relevant mother tongues are accorded the appropriate status ('accepted and respected') and that members of the minority groups can use them in a number of domains considered crucial for participation in society ('medium of education' and 'official language'). (Wee, 2005, p. 50)

Within the Korean nation there are no significant minority groups to speak of and the Korean language remains the language of choice for the common person in everyday life activities (i.e. medium of education and official language). As for South Korean peoples' linguistic rights pertaining to Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas's theory, "observing LHRs implies at an individual level that everyone can identify positively with their mother tongue(s), and have that identification respected by others" (p. 488) which is certainly the case for individuals in South Korea and is in step with their theory of LHRs completely. In fact, visitors to the country, in particular long-term expatriates, are expected to or are at least hoped to become versed in the Korean language. For the most part, the Korean language itself and the Hangul cursive are thriving and evolving just as the majority of languages generally continue to do. It certainly is not 'devaluing' itself through the increased usage of borrowed English lexicon. In actuality, such usage of a "loan equivalent alongside a pure Korean word can add significantly to the expressive power of the Korean language" (Park, 1989, p. 137).

In the framework of the theory of LHRs, it is commonly held that LHRs be treated not only as an individual right, but also the rights of the collective. In doing so however, "the dilemma for LHRs advocates is this: either the rights sought by LHRs advocates are collective (and thus not human rights) or they are individual (and thus human rights, but then they do not address language in the intended social sense)" (Wee, 2005, pp. 65-66). A distinction needs to be made clearly within the theory of linguistic imperialism as to whether LHRs are concerned for the rights of collected groups to use the language as they see fit, or for an individual's right to use the language. This is, of course, the topic of a

whole other paper. In equating LHRs to an individuals' human rights of life and liberty, the right to work, the right to food and the right of education, than the argument for connecting LHRs to the collective is increasingly more complicated. For if the theory were based solely on the individuals' rights, "then the goal of protecting minority group languages becomes all the more difficult" (Wee, 2005, p. 65).

Donnelly (1989) believes that equating LHRs as human rights:

Groups, including nations, can and do hold a variety of rights. But these are not human rights. Whatever their relative importance, (individual) human rights and (collective) peoples' rights are very different kinds of rights and should be distinct. There are legitimate social limits on the exercise of all individual rights. Society does not have certain rights, or at least responsibilities, that legitimately constrain the exercise of many human rights; a properly ordered society must balance individual rights (against society) with individual duties (to society). (p. 145)

While the tenets of the linguistic imperialism theory are well intentioned and address a fundamental dilemma faced by people within the world, the learning of a language should hopefully never be viewed as the mechanism to lose one's mother tongue. When Akinnaso (1994) argues that "language is critical to self-expression, social identity, and community membership, language rights are important in preserving the value of autonomy and identity, leading to a convergence of 'individual' and 'communal' rights" (p. 141), he fails to recognize - as does the theory of linguistic imperialism - that the decider of one's language rights is ultimately the individual themselves, and the likelihood one giving up their mother tongue is minimal at best. For one's mother tongue is a rich source of one's own personal identity and culture, as Akinnaso agrees, and it aids in the development of one's outlook upon the world and life and giving up such a precious source of oneself is tantamount to the extreme of suicide. The learning of a FL hopefully can be seen as an expansion of one's knowledge and understanding of other peoples' and cultures, as Kubota (2002) duly notes in stating that "education for the age of internationalization aims to develop the ability to co-exist and interact without prejudice among people who have different cultures and customs" (pp. 23-24) and there is no better resource we have to accomplish this goal than through a common language.

## Conclusion

Not unlike other nations and other languages, Korean society and language are under a continual alteration in regards to their social, cultural, economic and political life. When such adverse and ever present modifications take place within a society, they "often require new words to describe changes in technology, sports, entertainment, and so on" (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2003, p. 511). In South Korea today, the transformations that have taken place to the everyday vernacular used by the population is in stark contrast to that of fifty years ago due to these factors.

With the ever increasing emphasis placed on the population to become communicatively competent in a foreign language, predominantly English, by the MOE and the domestic conglomerates, the phenomenon of borrowing English lexicon will surely advance unabated. As well, accompanying the influences of the MOE and the conglomerates is the fact that South Koreans themselves are becoming much more globalised and outward looking than they have ever been in their entire history as a nation with increased travel and more opportunities to encounter foreigners within the nation? In such a case, "one must not forget that language change is the result of dynamic interaction between the internal linguistic development and the external socio-psycho-econo-political factors in language contact situation" (Baik & Shim, 1989, p. 276). Koreans came into contact with native English speakers with more prevalence at the end of the Second World War and during the Korean War with United Nation forces and continuing on into the sixties and seventies with the continual deployment of American forces on the peninsula, along with American Peace Corp volunteers who came for the purpose of teaching English throughout the nation. This has fostered the process of borrowing lexicon and influencing the internal linguistic development.

When Korean language purists reason that the Korean language is "the only language in the world that is truly pure and beautiful" (Park, 1989, p. 137), they fail to acknowledge that the Korean spoken in the South has in its entire being never been pure, as it is predominantly derived from Mandarin Chinese. Such beliefs stem from the pro-nationalistic ideology that was prevalent at the beginning of the twentieth century, and persists today among some, due to the socio-psycho-econo-political factors that were taking place within the nation at that time. In much of the world, most notably the advanced countries of the world, a large shift "where manufacturing industries are in decline while the service and creative industries are expanding rapidly, is that individuals will need a relatively high level of lin-

guistic skill if they are to participate in waged labour at all" (Cameron, 2002, p. 72). This is precisely the mindset of the MOE, conglomerates and individuals at the present time in South Korea. The majority of people are less concerned whether or not their language is pure and beautiful, rather their chief concern is: will they be able to participate in the modern and new economy of their country and the world. With such a mentality, the populace is readily embracing the fact that to be communicatively competent in a foreign language, whether it is English, Chinese, Japanese, or Spanish, allows them to further their chances of success within their life and work.

It just so happens that English has become the language of choice. However, as Nunan (2003) points out:

... the effect of the emergence of English as a global language on first and indigenous language development needs to be studied, and, in developing countries, a key question is the extent to which access to English is a mechanism for determining who has access to economic advancement and who does not. (p. 611)

In following Nunan's belief, Phillipson (1997) contends that:

If the world moves toward a pattern of global diglossia, with English as the language of the haves, while the have-nots and the never-to-haves are confined to other languages, this would represent one of the major sinister consequences of globalisation, McDonaldisation and linguistic imperialism. (pp. 243-244)

While both thoughts have their merits and need to be considered seriously as to the effects that learning a SL/FL have on an individual and a society, the fact remains that due to continual contact with other languages, the borrowing of lexicon from one language to another will sustain its proliferation for the entirety of mankind, along with people throughout the world learning languages other than their mother tongues. Additionally, with the shrinking of the world brought to us via technology, media, air travel, and computers, it goes without saying that "using borrowed words is a reasonable and practical solution" (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, p. 181), as is frequently the case in South Korea, as the language simply does not have a corresponding vocabulary for many things within their own vernacular. It must be remembered that individuals are the ultimate deciders of whether or not they borrow words or lose their language, and that "users of a language do not inherit a fixed set of patterns of use. They inherit the ability to manipulate and create with a language, in order to express their perceptions" (Yule, 1996, p. 248). And when one borrows, such manipulation and creativity can take place, with the consequences that it may last forever in their psyche and add a new and wonderful element to themselves, their nation, or the world.

Borrowing of lexicon is certainly not a new phenomenon nor one that will cease to exist. One of the great benefits of and why borrowing should continue to prosper is that it:

... might with just as much right be termed some of the milestones of general history, because they show us the course of civilisation and the wanderings of inventions and institutions, and in many cases give us valuable information as to the inner life of nations when dry annals tell us nothing but the dates of the deaths of kings and bishops. (Jespersen, 1956, p 23).

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