CHARACTERISTICS OF PLEONASTIC EXPRESSIONS IN KOREAN

TAE HYUN OUM[1]

Abstract. An analysis of the usage patterns of pleonastic expressions in the Korean language reveals that the rule of constructing Chinese-based words has the most important impact. Although the Korean writing system is phonographic, most literary terms are rendered in the Chinese writing system, which is ideographic. A Korean word can be made of two nouns, or one noun and one adjective, or a verb that includes an object, without marking any boundary between those. Therefore, a speaker who is not conversant with the meanings of Chinese words may add a familiar Korean word that is redundant in meaning. In recent years, pleonastic expressions have also been commonly found in words of English origin, and such a phenomenon will continue in the future[2].

Key words: pleonasm, redundancy, compound word, sinograph.

1. INTRODUCTION[3]

Comments about pleonasm have been made since antiquity, but most of them refer to Indo-European languages. In the Greek and Latin treaties of classical rhetoric, this linguistic phenomenon (gr. *pleonasmos*, lat. *expletivus*) is described as a vice of expression (lat. *solecismus*), which consists in adding or repeat unnecessarily words that have the same meaning. Even in contemporary linguistics this view is widespread. Not only in European linguistics, but also in Korean linguistics pleonasm is regarded as a mistake (Yi, Bae 1987: 686) which is usually made by less-educated people. One might expect that speakers of an average level of knowledge in the given language would recognize such a mistake.

[1] Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, thom89@hanmail.net.

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[3] In this article, the following signs are used: + means combined words. [ ] shows independent words; the letter before [ ] signifies the part of speech, such as, N=noun, ADJ=adjective, VB=verb, ADV=adverb, OB=object. ( ) signifies division into bound morphemes that are dependent on the sentence although independent of the meaning (e.g., affix, bound noun, etc.). For example, $[_n[(\alpha)(\beta)]+_n[c]]$ signifies a word, αβc, which is made of the independent noun, αβ, which is composed of bound morphemes α and β, and the independent noun, c. { } shows a phrase that is used as a singular unit of meaning. * signifies non-standard language. In the examples, some Korean words that are not translatable into English are marked with Romanized Korean words. In this investigation, I employ dictionaries and an officially recognized large-scale corpus for the data of this research. The corpus used for this research was developed by the "21st Century Sejong Project". This corpus contains over 200,000,000 words and phrases. When necessary, I marked the corpus frequency in parentheses.

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This phenomenon has been linked to the more general issues that manifest in any language, i.e. contamination (Paul 1920: §121), hyper-characterisation or emphasis of meaning(Schwyzer1941, Iordan 1948: part IV, chapter III), redundancy (Sala (coord.) 2001: 191, No 2009: 276), repetition/tautology (Avram 1986: 385), or just a negative effect of lexical or grammatical synonymy (Gu□u Romalo 2000: 133). It can be observed that there is not a single point of view with regard to the specific terminology used to describe this phenomenon, which is certainly very complex. Sometimes even the same author hesitates in the use of such terms as *pleonasm*, *redundancy* and *perissology*.

However, many people are often unaware of the linguistic error in some pleonastic expressions they use. Sometimes, people may be aware of the incorrectness and still use the expressions anyway. Some pleonastic expressions seem to have been popularly accepted as normal, and some even make it into dictionary entries and become a part of the standard lexicon. Using pleonastic expressions, therefore, is a multi-dimensional issue, which involves the speaker's linguistic knowledge and intentions, as well as language policies.

On the other hand, analysing the process of formation and expansion of the pleonastic expressions is an important endeavour, which sheds light on the relationships among individual agency and intentions, social acceptance, and the evolution of language. If the result is the same in several languages, the origin or cause of the phenomenon can be different from one language to another. Sornicola (2006: 400) distinguishes, based on the nature of the process, the following three cases of expletives/pleonasms due to:

1. processes of desemanticisation (bleaching) of typical grammaticalisation paths. These are particularly evident in phenomena that involve constructions with modal or aspectual value;

2. factors more specifically connected to planning strategies characteristic of spoken discourse. These are particularly evident phenomena of pronominal deixis and in their syntactic linearization;

3. metrical and prosodic factors.

This classification, as the author notes, is not absolute. Indeed in Korean, expletives/pleonasms have some specificities which do not exist in the European languages .Therefore, in what follows, I will try to describe the causes that led to the manifestation of pleonasm in Korean and to make a classification of the most common pleonastic structures in the Korean language.

2. THE SPECIFICITIES OF PLEONASTIC EXPRESSIONS IN KOREAN

The emergence of pleonastic expressions in Korean can be explained not only by reference to the structure of the Korean language, but also to the history and evolution of this language, especially the spread of Chinese writing. The majority of pleonastic expressions in the Korean language are combinations of an indigenous word and a Chinese or English word.

Modern Korean uses an alphabetic writing, *Hangul* (original name *Hunminjeongeum*), which became the official writing only in the nineteenth century although it was created as early as the fifteenth century. Like many other nations in Asia, Japanese or Vietnamese, Koreans used since ancient times Chinese ideograms for writing, the so-called *Hanja* writing. Across time, the use of Chinese ideograms caused major changes in the vocabulary of Korean. For example, indigenous Korean name for "water" is

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mul, but in Korean the Chinese word *su* is also used together, because speakers used this word also when uttering the corresponding Chinese ideograms, not only with the Korean naming[4].

But, structural differences between Chinese and Korean required the use of a number of phonetic and semantic adaptation of Chinese ideograms. This process of adapting semantic and phonetic Chinese ideograms was not uniform and has depended, over time, on certain styles or schools of writing, the best known and more widespread being *Hyangchal*, *Gugyeol* and *Idu* (Kim 2008: 48). In the opinion of some sinologists (Handel 2008: 114), the use of *Hanja* meant a complex semantic and phonological adaptation of Chinese characters:

> "The scribe 'borrows' a graph conventionally used to write a morpheme in one language and employs it to write a synonymous morpheme in the other language. This act depends on a judgment made by a particular person at a particular time and place that is well motivated based on that person's knowledge of the two languages involved".

In this regard, a well-known example, given by the cited author, is the place name that in modern Korean would be pronounced *Gildong*, composed of two Korean morphemes meaning 'long piece' (Lee, Ramsey 2000:47, 2011: 68). This place name is sometimes written with the sinographs *jítóng* and sometimes with the sinographs *jíyŏng*. In the first case, the semantics of the Chinese morphemes that they normally represent in written Chinese are ignored (*jí* 'auspicious' and *tong* 'together'), and they are used to represent the homophonous Korean morphemes *gil* 'long' and *dong* 'piece'. In the second case, the pronunciation of the Chinese morpheme *yŏng* meaning 'long (time)' is ignored, and it is used to write the synonymous Korean morpheme *gil* 'long'.

By using Chinese ideograms for writing, numerous Chinese words have penetrated in Korean and a structural model to form words has been established. Even some words borrowed from English have undergone a process of adaptation to the structure of Korean language according the Sino-Korean pattern (see the examples below). Unlike neological loans from English, that have been made directly (Kor. *beoseu* < Engl. *bus,* Kor. *olenji* < Engl. *orange*, Kor. *misail* < Engl. *missile,* Kor. *keob* < Engl. *cup,* Kor. *teibeul* < Engl. *table,* Kor. *laket* < Engl. *racket*, Kor. *taieo* < Engl. *tire*) the loans from Chinese are the result of the long use of Hanja writing. Even today, Hanja is used in South Korea to transcribe the Korean proper names or to perform disambiguation of words when necessary. According to statistics native Korean words account for about 35% of total Korean vocabulary, while about 60% consists of Sino-Korean words. The remaining 5% comes from loan words from other languages, 90% of which are from English (Kim 2008: 47).

3. FORMS OF PLEONASMS IN KOREAN: CHARACTERISTICS OF SYNTACTIC CLASSIFICATION

Pleonasms in the Korean language are generally compound words, because many of them are formulated with sinographs which have independent and redundant meaning. Also, it is very easy to combine these sinographs with indigenous Korean word of redundant meaning into one word. Because Korean compound words form into seemingly

[4] For practical reasons we avoid to useHanja ideograms or letters of the Hangeul alphabet.

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one-word compounds, ordinary people who do not have a good knowledge on sinograph can make pleonastic mistakes.

Since pleonasms in the Korean language are morphologically one word, it would affect the ordinary people's recognition of pleonasms, which in turn, would certainly influence normative acceptance into standard language. All the examples of pleonasms used in this article were selected from relevant literature and my additional searches on related expressions. Most of these expressions take one of the following forms: a noun stacked with another noun, an adjective and a noun combined together, an adverb added to a verb, and lastly, an object added to a verb[5].

3.1. Pleonasms with two nouns stacked together

The most common form of pleonasm in the Korean language is a compound word with two nouns. However, the word order of pleonasms is somewhat different from that of ordinary Korean compounds. In the Korean language, for a compound with two nouns, $[_N[A]+_N[B]]$, the head is located in [B], and [A] functions as a determiner of [B]. See the next two examples:

(1) $[_{N}[\underset{\text{language}}{\text{eoneo}}]+_N[\underset{\text{ability}}{\text{neungryeok}}]]$

(2) $[_{ADJ}[\underset{\text{linguistic}}{\text{eoneojeok}}]+_N[\underset{\text{ability}}{\text{neungryeok}}]]$

In the two examples above, the head of the compound words is *neungryeok* (ability), in the position of [B]. *eoneo* (language), in the position [A]in example (1), serves as a determiner of *neungryeok* (ability). Similarly, *eoneojeok* in example (2), an adjective, modifies the noun, *neungryeok* (ability). This shows that $_N$[A] plays the role of determiner for $_N$[B] at a $[_N[A]+_N[B]]$ style compound like $_{ADJ}$[A] plays the role of determiner for $_N$[B] at a $[_{ADJ}[A]+_N[B]]$ style compound.

In contrast, for pleonastic compounds that take the form $[_N[A]+_N[B]]$, the head is placed in [A], and the noun [B] modifies [A]. When $_N$[A] is divided into two more specific elements, (α) and (β), these are not independent of each other yet are distinguishable in meaning. So the formula $[_N[A]+_N[B]]$ can be rewritten as $[_N[(\alpha)(\beta)]+_N[B]]$. In this new formula, (β) and $_N$[B] are redundant in meaning. However, because (β) is a bound morpheme in a compound, it cannot be separated from $_N$[A]. Therefore, it could be inferred that the independent word, $_N$[B], is to be added to $_N$[A].Also etymologically $_N$[B] is usually indigenous Korean word which is easy to be understood by Korean speakers, so this is added to give more information and to emphasize the speaker's intention.

In conclusion, $_N$[B] is an indigenous Korean word with an expansive meaning that offers additional explanation to $_N$[A], which consists of sinographs i.e. (α)(β), which are hard to be understood and have narrower meaning. Therefore, in pleonastic compounds

[5] The sources of the examples used in this paper are "The Structure of Pleonasms" (Yi, Jaein 1999), "The phenomena of Pleonasms in Korean language" (No, Myeonghee 2006), "Pleonasms of Sino-Korean and Korean Words" (No, Myeonghee2006), and "Several Phenomena Related to Transparency of the Meaning in the Korean Language" (Kim, Jung-nam 2007).

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with the $[_N[A]+_N[B]]$ structure, $_N[B]$ modifies $_N[A]$ unlike regular compounds. This is an important point in understanding Korean pleonastic compounds of $[_N[A]+_N[B]]$ structure because a speaker would accept the pleonastic compounds as if they were ordinary compounds and the speaker would infer the meaning by analogizing the regular compounds principle, in which $_N[A]$ modifies $_N[B]$, to the pleonastic compounds. This analogy reinforces to interpret the pleonastic compound as a word of different meaning because $_N[A]$,which include the meaning of $_N[B]$, must modify $_N[B]$ again and some of these pleonastic compounds generate new meaning. The most common examples of this kind are compounds that have the sinograph *ga* (home or family) and the Korean word *jip* (house). Here isan example[6]:

(3) $\underset{\text{maternal family}}{\text{oegajip}} < [_N[\underset{\text{maternal family}}{(oe)\ (ga)}]\ +\ _N[\underset{\text{house}}{jip}]] \qquad \underset{\text{maternal family}}{(15\text{ times})}\ :\ \text{oega (47 times)}$

In the above example, the word with *jip* at the end indicates tangible substance, especially some kind of space, such as a building or a house, whereas the words on the right side denote an intangible quality, such as a family or familial relations. Since the $_N[A]$, *oega* (maternal family)must modify the $_N[B]$ *jip* (house),ordinary Korean speakers tend to interpret the meaning of this word as a combination of "maternal family" and "house". So the meaning is interpreted as "the house of maternal family". My analysis of the National Institute of the Korean Language corpus supports differentiated meanings as illustrated above. In this corpus, there are 15 example sentences with *oegajip*, as opposed to 47 examples of *oega*. (Incidentally, both *oegajip* and *oega* are part of the standard vocabulary in this corpus.) Out of the 15 examples of *oegajip*, 10 examples (about 67%) used this word as a locative for a verb that indicates movement or arrival (coming, going, leaving, or arriving), or for a verb that denotes existence or living. This shows that *oegajip* is used to indicate a specific place. In contrast, only 13 out of 47 example sentences (about 36%) that include *oega*, use this word as a locative for a verb. The distinction between the two words is not perfect, yet there is an apparent tendency of limited recognition of redundancy for the pleonastic expressions with *jip.*

3.2. Pleonasms with an adjective and a noun stacked together

In Korean, this type of pleonasm can be expressed with the formula, $[_{ADJ}[A]+_N[B]]$ in which the adjective and noun are stacked together. In this type, the noun is based on sinographs, and can be separated into two bound morphemes. Therefore, the formula can be specified as $[_{ADJ}[A]+_N[(\alpha)(\beta)]]$. Etymologically the $_{ADJ}[A]$ is an indigenous Korean word, whereas $_N[B]$ is a compound word based on sinographs. Semantically, $_{ADJ}[A]$ and (α) are redundant in meaning and morphologically, $_{ADJ}[A]$ is an independent word, whereas (α) and (β) are bound morphemes. It could be said that $_{ADJ}[A]$ is added to an already existing word, $_N[(\alpha)(\beta)]$, because the (α) in $_N[(\alpha)(\beta)]$ is a bound morpheme, which cannot be mobilized independently in a sentence. The indigenous adjective offers a further explanation of the noun based on sinographs, and from this process the adjective usually contributes to the

[6] The words on the right side of the slash (/) are those without redundant elements.

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word to have a different meaning.The following examples illustrate some of pleonasms of this type:

(4) [saesinrang] < [$_{ADJ}$[sae] + $_{N}$[(sin)(rang)]]
newlywed groom new new married man

(5) *[saesinbu] < [$_{ADJ}$[sae] + $_{N}$[(sin)(bu)]]
newlywed bride new new married woman

The compound word, *saesinrang* (newlywed groom), in the above example is an entry in the dictionary. Interestingly, there is no such word as *saesinbu* (newlywed bride), the word that would be the female equivalent of *saesinrang* in the dictionary. The word *Sinbu* is listed in the dictionary and is defined as newlywed bride.[7] It should be noted that the noun *sinrang* is widely used interchangeably with 'husband' aside from being used as 'newlywed groom', the usage as defined in the dictionary. My analysis is that in the process of adding the $_{ADJ}$[A] *sae* to the $_{N}$[B] *sinrang*, some semantic divergence has been produced between *sinrang* and *saesinrang* because the $_{N}$[B] *sinrang* also has a meaning of just 'husband'. As a result, semantic redundancy is not sharply recognized in reality.[8] In contrast, *sinbu* is used only as 'newlywed bride' as defined in dictionaries. I suspect *saesinbu* is hardly used for the same reason.

3.3. Pleonasms with an adverb and a verb

Pleonastic verb phrases with an adverb and a verb can be classified into two kinds. One is where the adverb has the meaning that is already included in the verb being modified, and the other is where the adverb is logically unnecessary. In the former, the adverb is the element that produces semantic redundancy, simply because the adverb cannot exist without the verb which it modifies. Let us see the following example:

(6) hamkke dongeophada
togetherto collaborate

In the second type of pleonastic verb phrase, a logically unnecessary adverb is added. Unlike the other types of pleonasm, this type of pleonastic phrase mostly neither has obscure words based on sinographs, nor consists of jargon. A lack of understanding of the meanings of the words on the part of the speakers is not likely to be the reason why such pleonasms occur, hence those pleonasms may be wilful choices on the part of the speakers. For example, a speaker may add a superfluous adverb because she or he feels that the meaning of the verb is not clear, or that the meaning is not being communicated sufficiently, or that the sentence is not quite complete pragmatically.

[7] *TheStandard Korean Language Dictionary* published by the National Institute of the Korean Language.

[8] For example, in the sentence, "Tell your *sinrang* not to be so different as to be too kind to his parents-in-law." (Yi, Hyegyeong, Munhakkwajiseongsa, 2002) *sinrang* means husband.

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Adverb phrases are often added to those verbs that indicate directional movements, such as, *ddeoreojida* (fall down), *deureogada* (enter in) etc. These are intransitive verbs that do not require any argument other than the subject and generally are used along with adverbs that indicate a place or a direction. Without such an adverb, an intransitive verb alone does not provide sufficient information, and thus it sounds meaningless and unclear. Therefore, it feels safer for the speaker to include an adverb. The following example shows similar circumstances.

(7) *araero ddeoreojida
downward to fall down

In this example of pleonasm, the modifying adverb phrase does not supply additional information, and logically it is not necessary, but it is commonly used. Such expressions are also found where an adverb is inserted to express the meaning of a tool while the verb already includes the meaning. Consider the following example:

(8) *ibballo mulda
with teeth to bite

The added adverb reinforces the meaning of the verb, thereby the speaker is assured that the communication will be successful. The following example further illustrates this point:

(9) *deo seonhohada
more to prefer

3.4. Pleonasms with an Object and a Verb

Most of the Korean pleonasms with an object and a verb occur when a redundant object is added to a verb based on a sinograph word that includes an object in itself. Syntactically, such a verb does not require an object, yet some speakers perceive it as a regular transitive verb and insert an object. This type of pleonasm is characterized by constructive freedom whereby various kinds of words can be placed at the location of an object.

In Korean, this type is formularized as $_{OB}$[A] $_{VB}$[B]. In this formula, $_{OB}$[A] can be specified as $_{OB}$[$_{N}$[a](b)]. A noun comes in for [a] and an object postposition for (b). Also, $_{VB}$[B] can be specified as $_{VB}$[(α)(β)(γ)], where (α) is the stem of the verb,(β) is bound noun which plays a role of object of the (α) and (γ) is the affix. In most cases, the redundant object, $_{OB}$[A], is of indigenous word. The (α) and (β) of $_{VB}$[B] are words based on sinographs. The meaning of $_{OB}$[A] is the same as (β) in $_{VB}$[B], hence $_{N}$[a] is the same as (β). Because (β) cannot be separated from $_{VB}$[B], $_{OB}$[A] is the superfluous word. The following example illustrates this point:

(10) *doneul mogeumhada < $_{OB}$[$_{N}$[don](eul)] $_{VB}$[(mo) (geum)(hada)]
money to fundraise money to raise fund

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In the above example, the superfluous element ($_{N}$[a]) is *don* (money), which has a nearly identical meaning as *geum* (fund) and does not offer any additional information. When $_{OB}$[A] is removed from the above phrase, the meaning does not change. But depending on the perspective, $_{OB}$[A] may be seen as serving some function. (Of course it may be considered simply as an error.)My opinion is that it has some kind of semantic role. The $_{VB}$[B] in this example, *mogeumhada* (to fundraise), includes the meaning of *fund*, therefore this verb should not be used with an object of *don* which also means 'fund'. If it is used with an object which means 'fund', it becomes redundant. However, there are some examples which are not redundant even if the verb *mogeumhada* is used with an object which contains meaning of fund. For example, there are some nouns which can be placed in the $_{OB}$[A] place containing the meaning of 'fund', such as *seongeum* (monetary donation), *huwongeum* (contribution fund), and *jiwongeum* (support fund). When these words are used as an object of the verb *mogeumhada* (to fundraise), they do not mean exactly the same thing, and thus affect the amount of information that is produced in the sentence. Although some of these expressions are somewhat redundant, they may not be classified as pleonasms.

4. CONCLUSION

Pleonasm is a general linguistic phenomenon which occurs in most languages. The Korean language is not an exception and, as discussed in this article, there are several different types of pleonasms. Although using pleonasms is generally considered not to be a desirable linguistic practice, some pleonastic expressions are widely used and often unavoidable because of a lack of linguistic knowledge on the part of the speaking public. The Korean language has morphological and lexical characteristics of syllables being stacked together which make the ordinary speakers harder to recognize if a word is pleonastic or not, because it sounds like one single word.

On the other hand, certain pleonastic expressions are not entirely redundant, depending on the overlapping elements. Some of these may produce a new meaning over time, and some others may be used only in specific, socially-accepted contexts. There is also a number of pleonastic expressions that serve certain functions such as added clarification or emphasis.

When classified morpho-syntactically, Korean pleonasms come in several types: compound words made of nouns and those made of a noun and an adjective; and phrases with a noun and an adjective, a verb and an adverb, and a verb and an object. From a morphological perspective, Korean pleonasms are easily accepted by the ordinary speaking public because Korean compound words which are widely based on Chinese words are often used seamlessly as one word. Pleonasm in Korean is justified by a tradition of writing with Chinese characters, which imposed a specific structural model.

Among Korean pleonasms, the obscure elements occur usually in Chinese words, and the redundant elements are usually indigenous Korean words. Similar forms of pleonasms are appearing more recently with English words, whereby an English word is explained by a superfluous Korean word added to it.

It seems that pleonastic expressions in Korean language will continue to increase, because pleonasms often occur where there are abstruse elements in the language. With the ever-increasing velocity of communication among different cultures, new terms and

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concepts originating from foreign languages are spreading rapidly in the Korean society. It is quite possible that myriad new pleonastic expressions will emerge and circulate among the Korean speaking public in the near future.

As a result of writing the Korean language with Chinese ideograms for many centuries, some pleonastic pattern shave come up, which were accepted as such and which served as a model of some English neological loans. Therefore pleonasm in Korean is, in some ways, different from what this phenomenon is in most European languages. In other words, pleonasm in Korean has more to do with the writing tradition rather than to the negligence of the expression.

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