

The Influence of Modernity and Globalization upon Language: The Korean Language between Confucianism and Americanization

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Abstract : The field research of the paper stands at the intersection between Linguistics and Sociology, while the problem of the research is the importance of language in the modernization process and in a globalized society. The research objective is to prove that language is a stimulant for modernity, while it defines the tradition and the culture of a specific society. In order to examine the linguistic change of the Korean language due to the modernity and globalization, the paper tries to answer one main question, What are the changes the Korean language underwent from a traditional version of Korean, towards one influenced by modernity?, and two secondary questions, How are explored in specialized literature the relations between globalization (and modernity) and culture (focusing on language)? and What influences the Korean language? For the purpose of answering the research questions, the paper has the main premise that due to modernity and globalization, the Korean language changed its discourse construction, and two secondary hypothesis, first is that in literature there are not much explored the relations between culture and modernity focusing on the language discourse construction, but more about identity issue and commodification problems, and the second hypothesis is that the Korean language is influenced by traditional values (like Confucianism) while receiving influence also of globalization process (especially from English language). In terms of methodology, the paper will analyze the two main influences upon the Korean language, referring to traditionalism (being defined as the influence of Confucianism) and modernism (as the influence of other countries' language and culture), and how the Korean language it was constructed and modified due to these two elements. The paper will analyze at what level (grammatical, lexical, etc.) the traditionalism help at the construction of the Korean language, and what are the changes at each level that modernism brought along. As for the results of this research, the influence of modernism changed both lexically and grammatically the Korean language. In 60 years the increase of English influence is astonishing, and this paper shows the main changes the Korean language underwent, like the loanwords (Konglish), but also the reduction of the speech levels and the ease of the register variation use. Therefore the grammatical influence of modernity and globalization could be seen at the reduction of the speech level and register variation, while the lexical change comes with the influence of English language especially, where about 10% of the Korean vocabulary is considered to be loanwords. Also the paper presents the interrelation between traditionalism and modernity, with the example of Konglish, but not only (we can consider also the Korean greetings which are translated by Koreans when they speak in other languages, bringing their cultural characteristics in English discourse construction), which makes the Koreans global, since they speak in an international language, but still local since they cannot get rid completely of their culture.

Keywords : Confucianism, globalization, language and linguistic change, modernism, traditionalism

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