

Social Media Neologisms: A Borrowed Affix as a Case of Pseudo-Anglicisms

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate a novel affix prevalently and productively used in social media, which is assumed to be borrowed from English into Korean loanblends. The novel affix is composed of a prefix-like and a suffix-like elements, but it seems to be distinguished from other regular combinations of a prefix and a suffix. In analyzing the affix, we attempt to highlight its peculiarities of the affix with empirical data. First, the seemingly borrowed affix does not behave like affixes found in the donor language (English) or the recipient language (Korean) from a linguistic point of view. Both languages have circumfixation rarely available in productive word-formation processes. Second, no regular assimilation rules of Korean apply to the affix boundary, which would otherwise be mandatory to such syllable contact contexts. Last but not least, the affix form has no correspondence to the donor language, and therefore it is claimed to be derived through secretion and taken as a case of pseudo-anglicisms.

Keywords: Neologisms, Loanblends, Borrowed Affix, Circumfixation, Secretion, Pseudo-anglicisms

1. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of use of the world-wide-web and the continuing pursuit of globalization have led us to be exposed to a variety of cultures, which is mostly mediated by the global language English. Specially because English is the primary foreign language in Korea, new ideas, concepts, and products have been introduced to the Koreans without translation: English words simply enter the Korean lexicon as loanwords.

In addition to more and more loanwords from English, the nation-wide interest in, and the intensive emphasis on, the English education result in creating new words which involve combination of existing Korean morphemes with heterogeneous morphemes: morphemes originating from foreign languages. This process of coinage is called loanblend [1]. This phenomenon is very prominent in the media and the internet languages and popular among younger speakers to whom coinage is a play on words. It seems that young speakers on the internet enjoy being creative and consolidate a sense of the community belonging by coining new words in novel ways.

With the existing borrowed word *phulo* /p^huɭo/ and the borrowed suffix *-le* /lɛ/, a neologism has been released in a show program: *phulo-pwulcham-le* /p^huɭo-pul^ham-lɛ/ ‘a person who seldom attends events very frequently as if not showing up were his intrinsic profession.’ After the boom of the novel word, the media and its consumers explosively use and create novel words of this kind. With the key data, this paper will address three questions throughout the paper: (i) *what type of affix does it represent?*, (ii) *what makes the affix*

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distinctive from other affixes?, and (iii) how is the peculiar affix form derived?.

2. DATA

The Korean National Neologism Investigation Projects initiated by the Korean government researched and extracted newly-coined and non-registered words found in news articles on the Naver portal by using a Web-based neologism extractor and a Web crawler [2]. The project 2016 published by the National Institute of the Korean Language reported that the number of neologisms created as loanblends amounted to 19.03 % (47 out of 247) in 2016 (pp. 38) [3]. Among these loanblends are the complex words involving the borrowed element *phulo-* /p^hulo-/. The four new loanblends as demonstrated in Table 1 involve the prefix-like and the suffix-like elements. Given that the prefixal element *phulo-* /p^hulo-/ is a clipped root borrowed from English professional, the words are composed of a borrowed element and a Korean stem: loanblends.

Table 1. New Loanblends With *phulo-* /p^hulo-/

Word	Frequency	Date of First Appearance
phulo-pwulcham-le /p ^h ulo-pult ^h am-lΛ/	866	May, 2016
phulo-pwulphyen-le /p ^h ulo-pulp ^h ʌn-lΛ/	68	August, 2015
phulo-salang-kkwun /p ^h ulo-salaŋ-ɕun/	22	March, 2016
phulo-chamsek-le /p ^h ulo-t ^h amsʌk-lΛ/	13	May, 2016

Interestingly, the suffix-like elements –le /lΛ/ and –kkwun /-ɕun/ are different; the former is seemingly a variant related to the English suffix –er while the latter is a native Korean suffix meaning a person who frequently or habitually does an activity, like one’s profession, denoted by a verb stem. These two pairs *phulo-...-le* /p^hulo-...-lΛ/ and *phulo-...-kkwun* /p^hulo-...-ɕun/ will be compared and discussed with respect to the word-internal structure in the following section.

3. THE AFFIXATION TYPE: CIRCUMFIXATION

In the exploration of a word structure, we are advised to identify morphemes in a word and then the type of each morpheme, which in turn will tell us how the morphemes are combined into the word. One of the productive word-creating processes is affixation, which yields new words in a productive and systematic way. For example, the word *unhappiness* in English is composed of three morphemes: *un-*, *happy*, and *-ness*. The adjective *happy* is a free root morpheme. Its preceding *un-* and the following *-ness*, however, as bound morphemes, are affixes, which productively engage in word-formation processes.

Depending on the location in relation to the root, an affix that comes before the root is called a prefix, while one that follows the root is a suffix. The prefix *un-* and the suffix *-ness* are observed to behave in a systematic, predictable way in forming new words:

- (1) [A un-[A happy]], [A un-[A able]], [A un-[A conscious]]-ly
- (2) [N [A happi]-ness], [N [A dry]-ness], [N [A un-happi]-ness]

The affixes *un-* and *-ness*, respectively, combine with adjectives; however, the former produces new adjectives as in (1) and the latter new nouns as in (2). The morphological rules tell us that the prefix *un-* attaches to the adjective *conscious*, not the adverb *consciously* in (1), and that the suffix *-ness* attaches to the larger

adjective *unhappy*, not the other way around because the prefix *un-*, otherwise, would not attach to the noun *happiness*. For instance, the internal structure of the three-morpheme word *un-happi-ness* is (3b) rather than (3a) or (3c):

- (3) a. [_A un-happi-ness] b. [_A un-happi]-ness c. un-_{[N} happi-ness]
-

Structure (3b), on the one hand, best illustrates that the three words *happy*, *unhappy*, and *happiness* are morphologically related and that they can be produced in the course of derivation. On the other hand, Structure (3c) would yield a new noun by attaching *un-* to a noun, which is rarely verified in English. Furthermore, the flat structure (3a) derives *unhappiness* directly from *happy* without any intermediate products such as *happiness* or *unhappy*, which would lend grammar undesirable redundancy. In sum, the three-morpheme word *unhappiness* is combination of a prefix and a suffix with the root observing the strict binarity.

However, the ternary structure as shown in (3a) can represent the internal structure of some words. A circumfix is known to surround the root. That means, a circumfix is composed of two parts: seemingly a prefix-like and a suffix-like elements around the root. An example of circumfixes is found in German [4]:

- (4) lieb (“to love”) – **geliebt** (“loved/beloved”)

The circumfix *ge-...-t* is affixed to the verb root, creating the past participle form, which is not a prefix plus a suffix. A useful way to identify a circumfix, in contrast with a prefix and a suffix, is as follows [5]:

- (5) A circumfix is a discontinuous affix X ... Y such that XZY is a complete word formed by affixing X...Y to some Z belonging to a specified category, and neither XZ nor ZY are words.

With the binary branching structure in (3b) and the circumfix definition in (5), let us turn to the new loanblend *phulo-chamsek-le* /p^hulo-tɕ^hamsak-lɛ/ compared to *phulo-salang-kkwun* /p^hulo-salan-ḱun/. If the elements surrounding the stem function as a prefix and a suffix, these words have binary structures; however, if the binary branching does not yield any existing word, i.e., ‘neither XZ nor ZY are words’ as in (5), the two elements constitute a circumfix. Examine the structures in (6):

- (6) *phulo-salang-kkwun* /p^hulo-salan-ḱun/
 professional-love-a person who does the activity denoted by the verb root
 ‘a person who gets involved in love professionally or habitually’

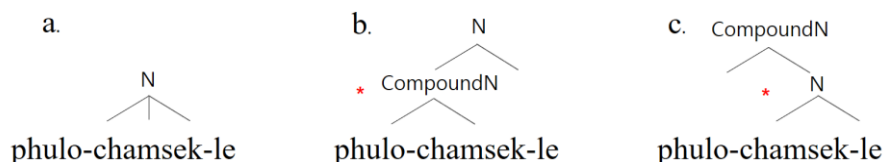
- a. b. c.

As shown in (6c), the suffix *-kkwun* is affixed to the root *salang*, the result of which is an existing noun in Korean. The combination of the clipped root *phulo* and the noun *salangkkwun* yields a new compound noun.

However, the compound *phulo-salang* in (6b) is not legitimate and hence the circumfix structure of (6a) is excluded because XZ is not a word but ZY is a word, which doesn't satisfy the circumfix definition.

On the other hand, neither *phulo-chamsek* in (7b) nor *chamsek-le* in (7c) are words¹. That is, both of the prefix-like and the suffix-like elements are required to the new word; the word-formation process, therefore, is best represented as in (7a).

- (7) *phulo-chamsek-le* /p^huɭo-tɛ^hamsʌk-lʌ/
 professional-attendance-a person who does the activity denoted by the verb root
 'a person who habitually shows up to attend meetings, events, etc.'



Interestingly, if (7a) is the word structure, both of the prefix-like element and the suffix-like element function as a circumfix since each part cannot be attached to a root independently.

To recap, the two neologisms are different from each other in terms of the word structure even though they seem to pattern alike. The word *phulo-salang-kkwun* /p^huɭo-salaŋ-kʌn/, as a three-morpheme words, consists of the clipped root, the free root, and the suffix, on the one hand. The word *phulo-chamsek-le* /p^huɭo-tɛ^hamsʌk-lʌ/, on the other hand, is composed of the circumfix and the free root as a two-morpheme word.

4. APPLICABILITY OF MANNER ASSIMILATION

Korean is known to show manner assimilation phenomena. In an attempt to investigate the transfer of manner assimilation from Korean to English, Kim examines three types of manner assimilation rules: obstruent-nasalization, lateralization, and liquid-nasalization [6].

Refer to the examples:

- (8) Obstruent-nasalization: Obstruents are nasalized before nasals /m, n/ _
 a. /ap.nal²/ [am.nal] 'future'
 b. /kuk.mul/ [kuŋ.mul] 'broth'
- (9) Lateralization: An alveolar coda is lateralized before a liquid onset
 a. /ot#lo.pi/ [ol.lo.bi] 'clothing lobby'
 b. /ot#lo.pi/ [on.no.bi] 'clothing lobby'
- (10) Liquid-nasalization: A preceding coda and the following liquid onset are both nasalized.
 a. /hap.li/[ham.ni] 'rationality'
 b. /kam.li/ [kam.ni] 'inspection'
 c. /kuk.lon/ [kuŋ.non] 'national opinion' ([7])

¹ The suffix-like element *-le* is controversial in that it functions as a suffix in words such as *daetkul-le* 'commenter; replier; a person who writes a comment on an online post, message, etc.' However, the *noun-le* combination, *chamsek-le* in (7c), has not appeared in newspaper articles on the Naver portal yet, so the analysis is on the right track.

² Following Kim [6], '·' indicates a syllable boundary and '#' a word boundary.

Among the three manner assimilation phenomena shown in (8)-(10), the phonetically motivated obstruent-nasalization and lateralization are reported to be easily transferred to English compared to the lexically restricted liquid-nasalization [6]. Put in detail, Korean speakers learning Korean assimilated 404 English targets out of 1500 (27%), whereas the American English speakers assimilated 8 targets only (3%). Among the total assimilation targets, the Korean speakers carried over to English words and phrases the obstruent-nasalization rule at 44% of time (e.g. *got#mad* [-**n.m-**], *hypnotic* [-**m.n-**]) and the lateralization rule (e.g. *fat#lady* [-**n.n-**], *big#league* [-**ŋ.n-**]) at 22.6%. However, the liquid-nasalization was applied at 1.9%, which was noticeably rare in the experiment.

Given the circumfix under discussion *phulo-...-le* /p^huɭo-...-lɻ/, the suffix-like element has the onset 'l'. We could assume that the seemingly borrowed affix may be influenced by the mandatory manner assimilation rules; that is, the alveolar coda can be lateralized according to (9a) or both of the coda and the onset 'l' are all nasalized according to (9b) and (10). Examine the phonetic realizations of the circumfix:

- (11) a. *phulo-pwulphyen-le* /p^huɭo-pulp^hjɻn-lɻ/ → [p^huɭo-pulp^hjɻl-lɻ]
 b. *phulo-pwulphyen-le* /p^huɭo-pulp^hjɻn-lɻ/ → [p^huɭo-pulp^hjɻn-nɻ]
- (12) a. *phulo-pwulcham-le* /p^huɭo-pultɕ^ham-lɻ/ → [p^huɭo-pultɕ^ham-nɻ]
 b. *phulo-chamsek-le* /p^huɭo-tɕ^hamsɻk-lɻ/ → [p^huɭo-tɕ^hamsɻŋ-nɻ]

As these neologisms are widely used in text through social media, rather than in spoken Korean, this study attempts to analyze actual tokens of the circumfix to examine the applicability of the mandatory rule. The sample tokens are randomly extracted from you-tube videos [8][9]. The sample token *phulo-thonghak-le* /p^huɭo-t^hoŋhak-lɻ/ as shown in Figure 1 patterns like (12b) but doesn't follow the mandatory assimilation rule.: the coda /k/ and the following onset /l/ are pronounced as a velar nasal and a flap [-ŋr-], not [-ŋn-].

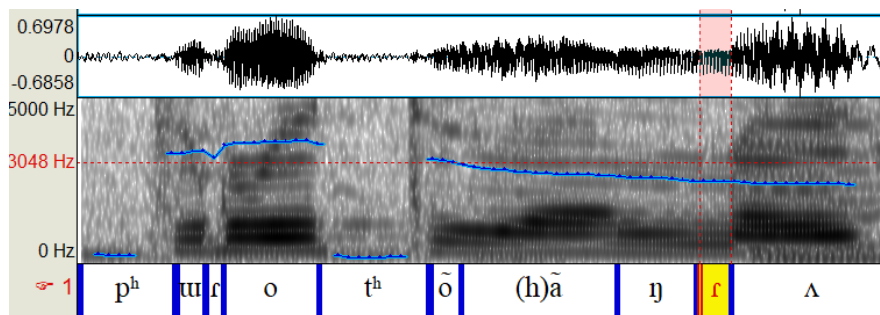


Figure 1. No lateral-nasalization 1: /p^huɭo-t^hoŋhak-lɻ/

Also, the second token *phulo-yuhayng-le* /p^huɭo-juhæŋ-lɻ/ in Figure 2 does not show the manner assimilation across the morpheme boundary, such as [-ŋl-] → [-ŋn-]. Instead, Figure 2 illustrates the nasal coda doesn't spread nasality to the following onset; the lateral onset, however, is pronounced as a flap [r].

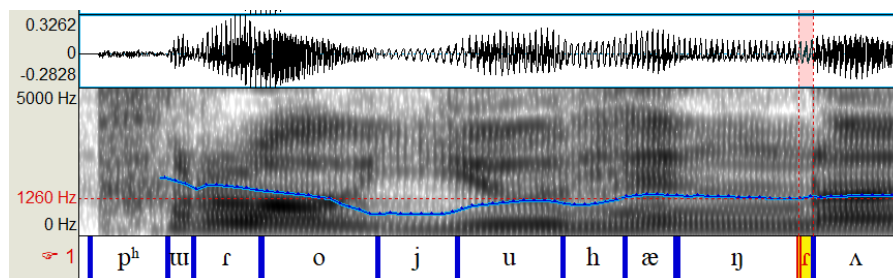


Figure 2. No lateral-nasalization 2: /p^huɭo-juhæŋ-lɻ/

These tokens best highlight the peculiarity of the circumfix under discussion given that manner assimilation rules including lateral-nasalization are mandatorily applicable in Korean [6]. The inapplicability of the lateral-nasalization, or at least the optional application, distinguishes the novel circumfix from other saffixes, though the argument further requires a quantitative approach to data collection and analyses.

5. SECRETION AND PSEUDO-ANGLICISM

This section addresses the final question of how to derive the circumfix, with special attention to the suffix-like element *-le* /lʌ/. The prefix-like element *phulo* /pʰulo/ is analyzed as clipped from *phulopheysyenel* /pʰuloɸesjʌnʌl/, a borrowing of English *professional*. The status of the clipped element is controversial: it is argued to be in the process of becoming a root [1]; it is a splint [10]. The consensus is that the clipped borrowing is a bound morpheme. However, this study takes the origin of the prefix-like element *phulo* /pʰulo/ as a clipped root because it can occur as a free morpheme in sentences as follows:

- (13) a. Wuli-nen phulo-ta.
 we-TOP professionals-DCL ‘We are professionals.’
 b. Phulo-nen talu-ta.
 professionals-TOP different-DCL ‘Professionals make difference.’

The clipped root behaves like a prefix-like element in the circumfix. This conversion is not surprising given that the free root *able* behaves as a bound suffix *-able* in words such as *tax-able*, *believ(e)-able*, *fashion-able*, and so on. The roots get involved in word-formation processes more productively when they turn into affixal elements.

Now let us turn to the suffix-like element *-le* /lʌ/. The origin of the form is traced to the English suffix *-er* [1]. The English suffix means ‘a person who does the activity denoted by a verb stem,’ which seems to be borrowed to a suffix in Korean loanblends. Its first emergence is reported to be in 2004 as *akphul-le* /akpʰulʌ/ and then as *taytkul-le* /tɛtkulʌ/ in 2006 (p. 198, [1]). The suffix of the English origin is very interesting not only because the borrowed suffix has an onset ‘l’ contrary to the onset-less English correspondence but also because there exist other variants whose onset is ‘n, m, or ph’ as in (14):

- (14) a. ya.ku.ne /jakun-ʌ/ ‘a person who work overtime’
 b. co.li.tol.i.me /tɛolitolim-ʌ/ ‘a person who expose somebody to public shame’
 c. o.ci.la.phe /otɛilapʰ-ʌ/ ‘a person who is meddlesome’
- (15) *tayt.kul.le* /tɛtkulʌ-ʌ/ ‘a commenter; a comment poster’

The suffix *-e* /-ʌ/ borrowed from the English *-er* is attached to nouns, whose coda in the word-final syllable is re-syllabified as the onset of the suffix. When the same process applies to nouns ending in ‘l’ as in (15), the peculiar suffix *-le* /-lʌ/ is identifiable. The reconstructing process of the suffix origin can be better understood with process called *secretion*. According to secretion cited below, *-le* /-lʌ/ is re-segmented and re-syllabified as in *tayt.kul.le*.

...Schmid (2011: 167) ...argues that “the hallmark of the process of secretion is that important aspects of the meaning of the original word are projected into the separated elements, which then gain productivity as they are used in new coinings... [11] [12]

This re-segmentation process seems to lead to a pseudo-anglicism. A pseudo-anglicism is defined as “a word in another language that is formed from English elements and may appear to be English, but that does not exist as an English word with the same meaning [13].” French affixes, for example, are combined with borrowed roots from English, which yields words with no counterparts in English (e.g. *sponsoriser*, *speakerine*, *zapper*, etc.) [14].

The prominently-used Korean loanblends *akphul-le* /akp^hulΛ/ and *taytkul-le* /tetkuulΛ/ are spelled with a geminate ‘l’ at the morpheme boundary, which is a reflection of ambisyllabicity of the lateral sound (i.e., a single lateral is syllabified into the preceding coda and the following onset across a syllable boundary). The preceding morphemes *akphul* and *taytkul* are recognized as free morpheme words in Korean. Therefore, the language users may have intentionally or mistakenly taken the syllable boundary as the morpheme boundary even though the onset ‘l’ is not part of the affix in the English correspondents.

6. CONCLUSION

We propose for a circumfix approach to some neologisms found in Korean loanblends. The prefix-like element *phulo* /p^hulo/ and the suffix-like element *-le* /Λ/ are assumed to originate from English and argued to form a circumfix. We focus on the peculiarities of this special affix in three aspects. First, the circumfix is a unique phenomenon given that neither donor language English nor the recipient language Korean use circumfixation as a productive word-formation process. The emergence of a new affixation type in Korean neologisms can provide evidence for the theory of universal grammar because we need to assume that the novel type of word-formation process is innate to the language users and exists independently of sensory experience. Also, the mandatory Korean manner assimilation rules don’t necessarily apply to the circumfix whereas they do across other morpheme boundaries. Finally, we have analyzed the affix to be derived as a result of secretion and pseudo-anglicism. Further research is required to collect more empirical data of the circumfix and investigate its semantic properties.

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