Shortening in Korean

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Jeong, Weon-Don. 1997. **Shortening in Korean.** *Studies in Phonetics, Phonology and Morphology* 3. 265-277. This paper deals with shortening phenomena in Korean. Among them, we examine formation of shortening, types of shortening, and properties of shortening. First, we show that shortening is often formed by partial deletion and attachment, and sometimes by glide formation. Second, we discuss that shortened forms are found not only in nouns and verbs but also in words and phrases, and that they occur in an optional way and in an obligatory way. Finally, we investigate that shortening is shown in casual style, that it changes form, that it is regarded as a process of deletion and attachment, and that it is not governed by phonological condition. **(Semyung University)**

In this paper, we examine shortening phenomena in Korean. Various kinds of shortening appear in Korean, but we focus on such shortening as (2a). We discuss formation, types and properties with respect to shortening.

Shortening, which is a kind of word formation, includes acronym, contraction, blending, clipping, and so on:

(1) a.. United States of America -> USA
  b. want to -> wanna
  c. smoke + fog -> smog
  d. literature -> lit.

In general we can define shortening as a process of decreasing form without meaning difference. Shortening in Korean often appears in the following forms:[1]

(2) a. kaul -> kal 'autumn'
  b. yengeyengmwunhakkwa -> yengmwunkwa

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[1] We use the Yale system as Korean romanization. Vowel length is ignored in shortened forms because it is not relevant to our discussion.

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c. -ko siphta -> -kophuta 'to want to'

The example in (2a) shows partial deletion and attachment. The part *u* disappears in *ul* and the remaining *l* attaches to the preceding form *ka*. On the other hand, the examples in (2b) and (2c) are similar to acronym and *wanna* contraction in English, respectively. The examples in (1) and (2) show that although long forms become short, there is no meaning change.

1. Formation of Shortening

In this section, we discuss how shortening is formed. As we have mentioned earlier, shortening is frequently made by partial deletion and attachment. For example, certain parts are deleted and remaining parts attach to preceding forms:

(3) a. maum -> mam 'mind'
b. wuli emma -> wul emma 'our mother'

The example in (3a) is a kind of lexical word; that in (3b) is a kind of phrase which consists of pronoun and noun. The parts *u* and *i* are deleted, and the remaining stranded consonants *m* and *l* attach to the preceding forms.

Shortening does not always show deletion and attachment. Glide formation may occur in vowel sequences:

(4) a. i ai -> (i ay) -> yay 'this person'
b. ce ai -> (ce ay) -> cyay 'that person'
c. ku ai -> (ku ay) -> kyay 'the person'

The examples in (4) consist of determiner and noun. Each final output is a merged form of determiner and noun. This indicates interesting phenomena. The high vowel *i* in *ai* becomes a glide *y*, and vowels in the determiner, which change to *y*, are merged with the noun *ay*.

Although shortening shows a change in form, it does not usually cause meaning difference. However, compared to non-shortened forms, certain shortened forms exhibit differences in meaning. S.-W. Cho (1989:201) presents the following examples:[28]

(5) a. Yengswu$_i$-ka kyay$_i$-uy chayk-ul tenci-essta.
-Nom he-Gen book-Acc throw-Past
'Yengswu$_i$ threw his$_i$ book.'
b. Yengswu$_i$-ka ku ay$_{*i}$-uy chayk-ul tenci-essta.
-Nom the person-Gen book-Acc throw-Past
'Yengswu$_i$ threw the person's$_{*i}$ book.'

The examples in (5) demonstrates that shortened forms can have a difference in use. In (5), *kyay* can refer to *Yengswu*, but *ku ai* cannot refer to *Yengswu*. This illustrates the binding difference between non-shortened and shortened forms.

2. Types of shortening

There are several types of shortening in Korean. For example, shortening appears in nominal and verbal forms, and it is shown in words and phrases. At the same time, optional shortening and obligatory shortening are found in Korean.

First, shortening is usually found in nominal and verbal forms:

(6) a. maum -> mam 'mind'
noul -> nol 'sunset'
ssawum -> ssam 'fight'
b. calangsulewun -> calangsulen 'proud'
c. po-assta -> pwassta 'see-Past'

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[28] The abbreviations are as follows:

Acc: accusative case marker
Gen: genitive case marker
Nom: nominative case marker
Past: past tense suffix

The examples in (6a) are nouns, wheras those in (6b) and (6c) are inflected forms of verbs. *U* or *wu* is optionally deleted in (6a), and *wu* is optionally deleted in (6b). Unlike vowel deletion in (6a) and (6b), vowel is not deleted in (6c). Instead, *o* optionally changes to *w* before vowels, and then the glide *w* attaches to the following vowel. This illustrates a different process. While the examples in (6a) and (6b) show vowel deletion, that in (6c) shows glide formation.

Second, certain parts of words are deleted and shortened:

(7) maum -> mam 'mind'
ssawum -> ssam 'fight'

In (7), shortening takes place in lexical words. High vowels such as *u* or *wu* optionally disappear in (7), and then the remaining parts attach to the preceding forms.

Shortening is also found in phrases:

(8) wuli emma -> wul emma 'our mother'
wuli apeci -> wul apeci 'our father'
wuli enni -> wul enni 'our older sister'
wuli oppa -> wul oppa 'our older brother'

The examples in (8) are a kind of phrases which consist of pronoun and noun. In (8), the high vowel *i* in *wuli* is deleted and *l* attaches to *wu*.

But the following examples indicate that unnatural shortened forms appear in phrases containing *wuli*:

(9) wuli hakkyo -> ?wul hakkyo 'our school'
wuli kyohoy -> ?wul kyohoy 'our church'
wuli nala -> ?wul nala 'our country'

The shortened forms in (9) is less natural than those in (8). This would be related to word-initial sounds. While in (8) the nouns which follow *wuli* begin with vowels, in (9) those have word-initial consonants. So it can be said that shortening more easily appears in phrases which consist of *wuli* and nouns with word-initial vowels.

Furthermore, it is likely that the vowel *i* in *wuli* is rarely deleted in the following examples:

(10) wuli cip -> *wul cip 'our house'
wuli kay -> *wul kay 'our dog'
wuli pap -> *wul pap 'our meal'

Compared to (8) and (9), the shortening in (10) is not acceptable. This may be relevant to syllable number. In (8) and (9), the nouns which are placed after *wuli* have more than two syllables; in (10), those have one syllable. So the number of syllable in nouns following *wuli* leads to occurrence or non-occurrence of shortening.

Finally, optional shortening and obligatory shortening are shown in Korean. Shortening often appears in an optional way:

(11) a. maum -> mam 'mind'
b. salangsulewun -> salangsulen 'lovely'
c. po-assta -> pwassta 'see-Past'

Although the examples in (11) illustrate change in form, there is no grammatical or semantic difference. This means that when we do not consider formal or informal usage of shortening, non-shortened or shortened forms can be used freely without restriction.

On the other hand, obligatory shortening is necessary for certain forms. When shortening does not take place in an obligatory way, they have ill-formed structures:[29]

(12) *o-assta -> wassta 'come-Past'
*seywu-essta -> seywessta 'stop-Past'

In (12), the vowels *o* or *wu* become a glide *w*, which shows glide formation. Since the non-shortened forms are ill-formed, shortening has to take place in (12).

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[29] C.-u. Song (1993) does not regard obligatory shortening as a process of shortening because he claims that shortening appears in an optional manner.

Compared to (12), the following examples show interesting phenomena:

(13) po-assta -> pwassta 'see-Past'
     cwu-essta -> cwessta 'give-Past'

Although the examples in (12) and (13) end with the same vowels in verb stems, obligatory shortening takes place in (12), but optional shortening appears in (13). In other words, despite having the same structure, glide formation must occur in (12), whereas it is optionally found in (13).

Similarly, the following examples show peculiarities with respect to other inflected forms:

(14) a. ha-yessta -> hayssta 'do-Past'
        toy-essta -> twayssta 'become-Past'
     b. mwe *ha-ye? -> mwe hay 'what are you doing?'
        an *toy-e -> an tway 'don't do'

While the declarative forms in (14a) illustrate optional shortening, the so-called *panmal* forms in (14b) show obligatory shortening.

Obligatory shortening also appears in the following forms:

(15) *tewu-essta -> tewessta 'be hot-Past'
     *chwuwu-essta -> chwuwessta 'be cold-Past'

The examples in (15) are declarative forms of *p*-irregular verbs. The non-shortened forms in (15) are ill-formed. Thus, shortening has to take place in (15).

Compared to (15), however, the following examples exhibit opposite facts:

(16) tewun -> *ten 'hot'
     chwuwun -> *chwun 'cold'

The examples in (16) are adjectival forms of *p*-irregular verbs. Optional or obligatory shortening is not permitted in (16). So they illustrate different results in which shortening cannot occur in (16) and it must occur in (15).

The following examples also illustrate interesting phenomena:

(17) a. i-essta -> *yessta 'join-Past'
b. i-essta -> yessta 'be-Past'

The example in (17a) is an inflected form of *s*-irregular verb *ista* 'to join', where *s* in the verb stem is deleted before vowels; that in (17b) is a kind of copula verb *ita* 'to be'. The examples in (17) have the same forms. But they show opposite results. Since shortening cannot occur in (17a), the shortened form is ill-formed; since it can occur in (17b), the shortened form is well-formed. This indicates that despite the same structural description, shortening does not always occur in an automatic way.

With respect to shortening, a phonetic motivation is involved in the copula verb *ita*:

(18) a. salam-i-essta -> ?salam-yessta 'humankind-be-Past'
C V C C
b. ??saca-i-essta -> saca-yessta 'lion-be-Past'
V V V C

The preceding noun in (18a) ends with a consonant, whereas that in (18b) a vowel. When shortening applies to (18a) and (18b), the former is less acceptable than the latter to Korean native speakers. Since this is related to hiatus, vowel-vowel sequences are avoided. So glide formation, where *i-ess* changes to *yess*, takes place in (18). In (18a), the non-shortened form maintains a CV structure, but application of shortening makes a CC structure. On the other hand, the non-shortened form in (18b) has a VV structure. When shortening applies to (18b), the shortened form becomes a VC structure. Since the VC structure is more natural and unmarked than the CC structure, the shortened form in (18b) is better than that in (18a).

3. Properties of shortening

In this section, we discuss properties of shortening in Korean: casual style, change in form, a process of deletion and attachment, and non-phonological condition.

First, shortening is frequently found in casual style:

(19) a. maum -> mam 'mind'
     b. ssawum -> ssam 'fight'
     c. telewum -> telem 'dirtiness'

The shortened forms in (19) often occur in colloquial and informal speech. In contrast, the non-shortened forms are used in formal style. Generally, young people prefer shortened forms to non-shortened forms. But linguistic variation is found in (19). At the same time, there are dialectal or idiolectal differences among Korean people.

Second, shortening changes form. The following examples illustrate that shortening cause change in form:

(20) maum -> mam 'mind'
     kalyewum -> kalyem 'itching'
     wuli emma -> wul emma 'our mother'

Certain situation or context can indicate usage of non-shortened and shortened forms. Despite form change, however, there is rarely meaning difference between non-shortened and shortened forms.

Third, shortening is frequently formed by deletion and attachment:

(21) cheum -> chem 'first'
     kwiyewum -> kwiyem 'affection'
     wuli apeci -> wul apeci 'our father'

In (21), the parts *u*, *wu* or *i* are deleted and the remaining parts attach to the preceding forms. High vowels are usually deleted in shortening. So shortening can be regarded as a process of partial deletion and

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attachment.

In addition, shortening is sometimes made by glide formation:

(22) mwues -> mwes 'what'
mwue -> mwe 'what'
po-assta -> pwassta 'see-Past'
sso-assta -> sswassta 'shoot-Past'

Compared to (21), there is no vowel deletion or consonant attachment in (22). Instead, glide formation is found in this case. The vowels *wu* or *o* change to a glide *w* when shortening takes place. This indicates that shortening is also formed by glide formation.

Finally, shortening is governed by a non-phonological condition:

(23) a. maum -> mam 'mind'
b. ssawum -> ssam 'fight'
c. salangsulewun -> salangsulen 'lovely'

The high vowels *u* and *wu* in (23) disappear in a vowel sequence and the remaining stranded consonants *m* and *n* attach to the preceding forms. This illustrates a purely phonological condition that vowels are deleted after vowels.

Vowel deletion phenomena such as (23) are pointed out by phonologists including P.-K. Lee (1979/1988), Y.-K. Kim-Renaud (1982), S.-C. Ahn (1985), and H.-S. Sohn (1987).30) Among them, Y.-K. Kim-Renaud (1982:476-477) presents the following rule:

(24) Casual *u*-Deletion (optional and variable)
X V u Y
1 2 3 4
1 2 ø 4
[+long]
(*U* is truncated when meeting another vowel and the remaining vowel is lengthened.)

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[30] Y.-K. Kim-Renaud, S.-C. Ahn and H.-S. Sohn discuss *u*-deletion only.

The rule in (24) can handle the following examples:31)

(25) a. maul -> mal 'village'
b. kwa!um -> kwam 'overdrinking'
c. siCulph-ki -> silphki 'poetry reciting'
d. ku#ay -> kyay 'that child'
e. ku#oleynci -> koleynci 'that orange'
(!: Sino-Korean Boundary, C: Compound Boundary,
#: Phrase Boundary)

According to her analysis, casual *u*-deletion is governed by purely phonetic motivations. This is because, irrespective of boundaries, this phenomenon applies to both native and borrowed words.

Similarly, S.-C. Ahn (1985:215-219), treating optional *u*-deletion in the frameworks of syllable phonology and lexical phonology, suggests that since optional vowel deletion is a postlexical phenomenon, it can apply to both non-derived and derived words. However, he points out that Kim-Renaud's rule cannot deal with (25d) and (25e). So he modifies her rule as follows:

(26) Casual *u*-Deletion (Mirror Image)

$$\begin{array}{cc} \_V & V \\ | & | \\ v & u \end{array}$$

The rule in (26), which describes the fact that *u* is deleted either before or after vowels, deals with the following examples:

(27) a. Non-derived Forms
kaul -> kal 'autumn'
noul -> nol 'sunset'
maum -> mam 'mind'
b. Derived Forms

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[5] For ease of exposition, the transcription of long vowels is omitted.

twuum -> twum 'initial sound'
yuum -> yum 'liquid (sound)'
ku elun -> kelun 'the man'

According to S.-C. Ahn, *u* is always deletable in (27). However, examples such as those in (27b) seem to be unacceptable to Korean native speakers. For example, *ku elun* 'the man' could not be realized as **kelun*. Moreover, *ku emma* is not pronounced as **kemma*.

Also, optional vowel deletion meets the following counterexamples:

(28) a. swuun -> *swun 'mercury'
b. paywum -> *paym 'learning'
c. alumtawun -> *alumtan 'beautiful'

Shortening is not found in (28). Although the examples in (28) have a similar sequence of vowels, the results of shortening are different. While the vowels *u* and *wu* might be deleted in (27), they cannot be deleted in (28). Thus, shortening is not subject to the phonological process of deleting high vowels after vowels.

Furthermore, the fact that shortening does not obey phonological condition is confirmed by other examples:

(29) a. kuukhata -> *kukhata 'to be deeply secluded'
ku oi -> *koi 'the cucumber'
b. hwaum -> *hwam 'sound harmony'
ium -> *im 'different sound'
c. alumtawum -> *alumtam 'beauty'
chakawum -> *chakam 'coldness'
kuliwum -> *kulim 'missing'

Like (28), *u*- or *wu*-deletion does not appear in (29). This means that some forms are resistant to vowel deletion. Thus, the examples mentioned above show that shortening cannot be explained by a phonological condition.

So far, we have seen that vowel deletion which occurs in shortening is not governed by a phonological condition. We now consider the phonological condition in glide formation found in shortening. The following examples show shortening with glide formation:

(30) a. *o-assta -> wassta 'come-Past'
*seywu-essta -> seywessta 'stop-Past'
b. po-assta -> pwassta 'see-Past'
cwu-essta -> cwessta 'give-Past'

In (30), the vowels *o* or *wu* change to a glide *w* before vowels. The examples in (30) show the same vowel sequences, but glide formation does not occur in an identical way. While glide formation must take place in (30a), it optionally appears in (30b). This demonstrates that as in vowel deltion, glide formation does not observe a phonological condition as well.

4. Summary

We have examined shortening phenomena in Korean. Shortening is mainly formed by partial deletion and attachment, and is sometimes made by glide formation. There are several kinds of shortening: nominal and verbal shortening, word and phrase shortening, and optional and obligatory shortening. Shortening shows the following properties: casual style, change in form, a process of deletion and attachment, and non-phonological condition.

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