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Korean Media's Mistranslation of News Articles from Foreign Media and Its Possible Consequences on Korean Politics and Society*

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Many people are prone to believe disinformation/fake news because of its provocativeness. Because most fake information is distributed via news articles on political issues in South Korea, it is hazardous to public and democracy by deception and manipulation. This study considers various types of disinformation that have been categorized by scholars with some examples found on current South Korean major media but also identifies a new type: mistranslation. This study examines specific types of South Korean mainstream media disinformation; it demonstrates mistranslation is an additional type; and it reveals mistranslated overseas news articles that have generated media disinformation. General types of disinformation or fake news that suit South Korea's social context are discussed with examples including mistranslation. After further discussion, with South Korea's social context as the backdrop for highlighting forms of mistranslation and other types of disinformation, the conclusion is followed by a critique of the conditions of English education needed to overcome mistranslation. This study shows the state of disinformation/fake news and its effects in South Korea through a different view of disinformation via trans-linguistic aspects, acknowledging that it is a normal social phenomenon open societies are supposed to face regardless of its possible negative influence in public.

[mistranslation/framing/media discourse/journalism/disinformation/fake news]

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I. INTRODUCTION

Disinformation/fake news and its role in influencing public opinion has often been spoken about especially since Moon Jae-in administration first launched in South Korea. Although it has been discussed more than ever, the phenomenon is not new at all. The spreading of fake information for manipulating the masses existed in all historical periods, but especially so in the modern era, when the technical means of communication have evolved to such a great degree and their impact has reached increasing magnitudes. The current phenomenon of fake news has, however, found its stride to an unprecedented scale since the South Korean presidential campaign of 2017. Invented news is readily taken by legacy media and has come to occupy an important agenda in politics. Many people in the general population are vulnerable to the content of false news, of being psychologically contaminated by it, and are prone to this form of disinformation and manipulation (Botei, 2017). As its scale keeps escalating it is becoming an ever increasing serious hazard to the public and to democracy in general, capitalizing upon the primal emotions and impulses of people, such as fear, anger, attachment, preference, etc. Exposed to such provocative, but misleading news, people eventually come to believe and consequently make decisions about society that is heavily influenced by its content.

Disinformation/fake news can be defined as act of manipulating public opinion by intentionally fabricating false facts about a specific subject or group with a view to pursuing certain political and economic objectives. As South Korea has rapidly entered an era of post-truth, fake information is flourishing throughout the media. Post-truth is a philosophical and political concept that refers to “the disappearance of shared objective standards for truth” and the “circuitous slippage between facts or artifacts, knowledge, opinion, belief, and truth” (Jang, 2018, pp. 92-93). The post-truth phenomenon is becoming more influential in the process of generating public opinion by appealing to an individual’s emotions even if the information is false or fake rather than objective facts (Farkas & Schou, 2018, 2019). Since all information is created by people with their own bias, it is difficult to reject every aspect of the information just because it is biased. However, the problem is that when people want a certain idea to be true, they use fake news to help to convince them that is true (Moravec, Minas, & Dennis, 2019). This confirmation bias is fostered by their wishful thinking that has little relevance to the truth.

Interestingly, it seems that creating disinformation/fake news in South Korea is mostly initiated by mainstream media journalists. Readers or viewers who share the same biases of the journalists readily take the information the journalists falsely made and circulate the information in closed social media postings. They often create non-existent organizations and sources from “interviews with influential overseas scholars.” The content includes clear lies and distortions of facts, along with false reports defaming specific individuals.

This kind of sharing of distorted information from overseas is frequently boosted by South Korean reporters' mistranslations. When this occurs suspicions arise that either their English proficiency is inadequate to handle articles written in English, or they intentionally mistranslate them so as to reflect their own biases. Regardless, their mistranslated articles have considerably contributed to circulating fake information among readers.

This is the point where this study begins. The threefold aim of this study is to look over some typical types of disinformation in the mainstream media of South Korea, to find out what kind of article mistranslation has been conducted, and to demonstrate how those mistranslated overseas news articles have influenced the generating of disinformation in the media. This study doesn't deal with the whole issue of the fake news, but does show disinformation in the context of South Korea and a different point of view about fake news in terms of its trans-linguistic aspect of disinformation.

II. TYPES OF DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Types of disinformation/fake news have been categorized by many scholars and experts. The number of types of disinformation can be grouped in many different ways. Typical disinformation circulated in South Korea could fall under five representative categories. This categorization is inspired by three resources (Wardle, 2016; Wardle, 2017; Zimdars, 2016).

1. False Connection

The first type is *False Connection*. Legitimate newspapers, magazines, and television shows publish news that is actual, but the way they present the news is misleading. An example, Figure 1 is evident in the headline from this newspaper.

The headline proclaims "Staff of Prosecution Office are Moving in a Group," insinuating that the staff are about to protest recent disciplinary measure against their head taken by the Ministry of Justice. The bolded area is the real outline of the news saying that "...people of Prosecution Office are moving in a group for a lunch." Even though headlines sound very serious, they don't always give readers correct information and actually have a different motive to simply gain attention. Stories like this are often referred to as 'clickbait.' The headline and the real story are falsely connected.

FIGURE 1[1]



<Brief Translation>
Prosecution Office staff members are rebelling against Choo Mee-Ae, Minister of Law, who submitted the request for excluding Yoon Suk-Yeol, the Chief of Prosecution, from the office. People of Prosecution Office are moving in a group for a lunch. There will be prosecutors meeting in more than 10 places.

2. False Context

The second one is *False Context.* An example is news concerning the monsoon season in early August in 2020. Many news networks were in competition in reporting the damage of nationwide heavy rain. Figure 2 is footage from the evening news of YTN, a Korean news network. It shows the Han River overflowing Olympic Road. The footage appears to be very relevant to the news about the damage in the Seoul area because of torrential rain.

[1] Prosecution Office staff moving in a group

FIGURE 2[2]
August 3, 2020 YTN



FIGURE 3[3]
July 27, 2011 Chosun Ilbo


경찰, 도로 잠긴 후 통제… 올림픽대로에 차량

비 계속 퍼부었다면 대재앙 불렀을 수도
광화문사거리는 통제 구간 지정도 안해

Translation is not necessary because it is about photo reuse.

However, the photo they used, Figure 2, had already been used 9 years ago in many different newspapers like in Figure 3. The photo in Figure 3 is the same with the one in Figure 2. The photo was taken in July 2011. YTN news pretended that the photo was recent. Even if there was no purposeful intention in using the old photo, it nevertheless is definitely an act of deceiving viewers.

3. Content Manipulation

Another type of disinformation/fake news is *Content Manipulation*. A photo may give you key information to infer what the article talks about, but sometimes the information of the photo is not always truthful. Figure 4 is the photo taken at a government cabinet council. President Moon and his cabinet members saluted the flag before the meeting. The photo was altered (Figure 5) using an editing program to make it appear President Moon put the wrong hand on his chest, suggesting that his mind is not clear enough to conduct his duty as the President of the country.

[2] Flood report on August 3, 2020 by YTN
[3] Flood report on July 27, 2011by Chosun Ilbo

FIGURE 4[4]

Original Photo



FIGURE 5[5]

Manipulated Photo



This is not a meme that carries symbolic meaning representing a particular phenomenon or theme. It is just a harmfully deceptive way of manipulating information.

4. Fabricated Content

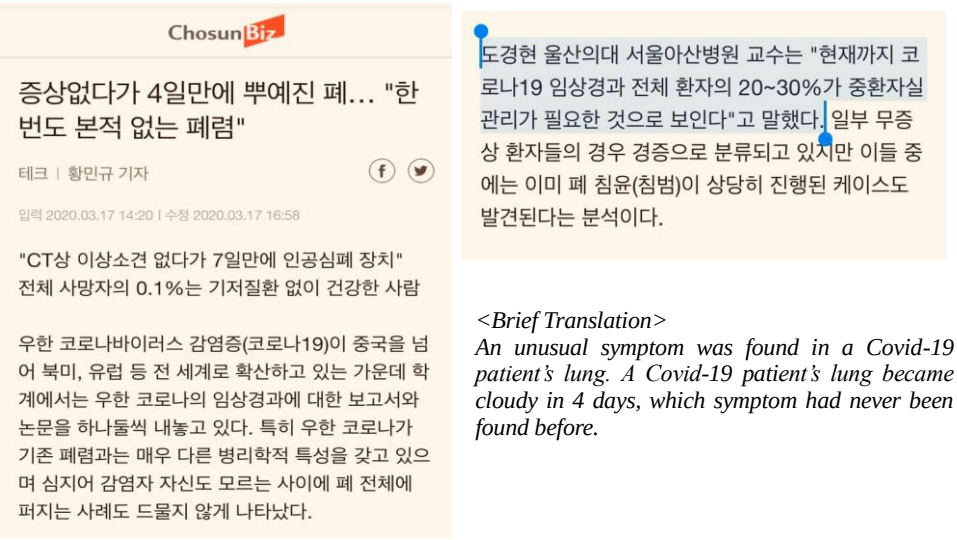
Some stories are simply made-up with no ground. It is called *Fabricated Content.* This content has no basis in reality. Figure 6 is an example. The reporter wrote that an unusual symptom was found in a Covid-19 patient's lung. He falsely quoted an interview with a doctor of Seoul Asan Hospital that a Covid-19 patient's lung became cloudy in 4 days, adding that this symptom had never been found.

The truth is that the doctor had never been asked to do the interview. The writer of the article took some information from a Covid-19 forum the doctor attended. But the intention and the content of his presentation was totally different from the article. The writer just took comments without any contextual consideration and created patients' cases. It is a fabrication of fake news.

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[4] President Moon saluting to the flag with the right hand
[5] President Moon saluting to the flag with the left hand

FIGURE 6[6]



<Brief Translation>
An unusual symptom was found in a Covid-19 patient's lung. A Covid-19 patient's lung became cloudy in 4 days, which symptom had never been found before.

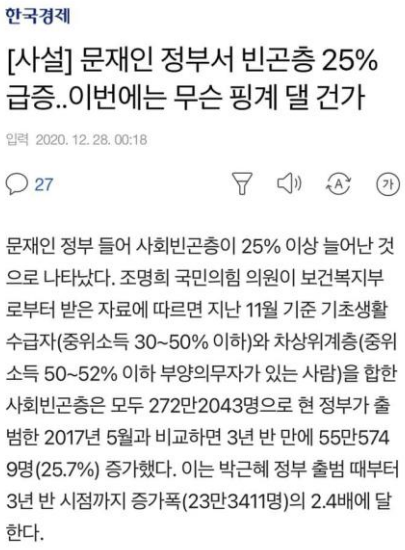
5. Misleading Content

The fifth type of disinformation/fake news is *Misleading Content*. It seems to be the most difficult kind of disinformation to uncover. Misleading Content can find its way into many real news stories, but it is hard to discover because it requires highly detailed knowledge about the given subject to determine whether the presented facts and details in any given news article are being mispresented.

Figure 7 is part of a news editorial on the increased rate of the impoverished under the current Moon administration. It says the number those in poverty has rapidly increased by 25%. According to this editorial, the increase rate is almost 240% of the one under the impeached Park's administration. Seemingly the rate is statistically correct because the number of people in low-income bracket getting government subsidy has increased indeed. Most of readers are not compelled to research for further information since they think the numbers given by those who are identified as experts don't lie.

[6] New Covid-19 symptom found

FIGURE 7[7]



한국경제

[사설] 문재인 정부서 빈곤층 25% 급증..이번에는 무슨 핑계 댈 건가

입력 2020. 12. 28. 00:18

27

문재인 정부 들어 사회빈곤층이 25% 이상 늘어난 것으로 나타났다. 조명희 국민의힘 의원이 보건복지부로부터 받은 자료에 따르면 지난 11월 기준 기초생활 수급자(중위소득 30~50% 이하)와 차상위계층(중위소득 50~52% 이하 부양의무자가 있는 사람)을 합한 사회빈곤층은 모두 272만2043명으로 현 정부가 출범한 2017년 5월과 비교하면 3년 반 만에 55만5749명(25.7%) 증가했다. 이는 박근혜 정부 출범 때부터 3년 반 시점까지 증가폭(23만3411명)의 2.4배에 달한다.

<Brief Translation>
25% increase of the number in poverty under Moon administration – Now what's the excuse? The number those in poverty has rapidly increased by 25%. The increase rate is almost 240% of the one under *the impeached Park's administration.*

However, in actuality the reason of the drastic increase of the number of the poor is that a significant number of those who had been neglected were finally found and added as recipients of various government basic living subsidies. It means that the increase is not a real increase at all. Like most readers, even the writer doesn't seem to want to go further to find out more information to validate his editorial.

III. A NEW TYPE OF DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

As we have seen in the types of disinformation above, disinformation/fake news is created to be used in reference to deliberate attempts to confuse or manipulate people through delivering dishonest information to them. The way of creating disinformation has branched out into an interesting form. News articles released by foreign media are a very good resource for South Korean news writers for their articles. They translate the entire content of an article which could attract Korean readers. Then they rearrange the paragraphs after trimming parts that to do not serve their purpose, extracting plausible headlines. The problem is that Korean article writers sometimes translate the original articles arbitrarily to fit them in the frame they had already set. It might be that their foreign language (mostly English) proficiency is not enough for correct translation,

[7] What's the excuse?

suggesting that it is a mere unintentional mistranslation. However, repeated mistakes of this nature can be considered intentional, as the following examples demonstrate.

1. Long Gas Lines from Russia?

Figure 8 is a well-known case of mistranslation and had been publicly and thoroughly talked about in 2017. President Trump had written a tweet message saying "I spoke with President Moon of South Korea last night. Asked him how Rocket Man is doing. Long gas lines forming in North Korea. Too bad!" Trump tweeted this to ridicule the oil shortage in North Korea that was a result of economic sanctions imposed on them, referring ZS Jung-Eun as Rocket Man. A part of one sentence states that "Long gas lines forming in North Korea." This might have instigated for the Korean writer's a desire to be pre-occupied on an idea that is a thorny issue of Korean Peninsula. He translated it in Korean as, "Construction of long gas pipes is underway" (Figure 9).

FIGURE 8[8]

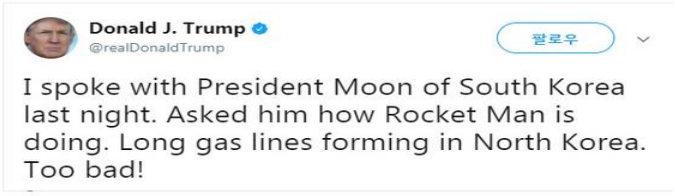


FIGURE 9[9]



<Brief Translation>
[Seoul Sinmun]Trump, on *his twitter, says "long gas pipeline is forming in North Korea… too bad."*
Trump says "long gas pipeline is forming in North Korea… too bad." – KBS News

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[8] Trump's twitter message
[9] South Korean media's headlines on Trump's twitter message

The countries surrounding the peninsula have always eyed the status of the relationship between North and South, seeking any chance to take advantage of it. Especially Russia has shown its interest in selling their natural gas to South Korea. To make this happen, the gas pipeline should inevitably go under the land of North Korea. Constructing a gas pipeline through North Korea without the lifting of sanctions is a violation of international law. The writer simply assumed that something had been clandestinely negotiated between North and South, and Trump showed his annoyance by saying “too bad!”

2. Love for Nuclear Independence

A former U.S. Secretary of Defense, William Perry, once was embarrassed by mistranslated articles of three major news agencies, including YONHAP in South Korea. The article quoting a part of Perry’s talk at a seminar reported that he supported the idea of South Korea and Japan getting an independent nuclear force. What he actually said was “it is preferable to those countries getting an independent nuclear force.” But the writer translated this sentence by ignoring the pronoun “it” and the preposition “to.” He was so excited to see the word “preferable” that he made a hasty decision about his interpretation (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10[10]



[10] William Perry’s twitter message

FIGURE 11[11]



<Brief Translation>
A former U.S. Secretary of Defense, William Perry, said that he supported the idea of South Korea armed with nuclear force. It is considered unusual because it was said by a former high U.S. government official. He thinks deploying U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea or Japan is preferable to those countries getting an independent nuclear force.

As seen in Figure 11, to make things clear, Mr. Perry even included a detailed version of the quote he actually said at the seminar. Clearly what he really said means he doesn't think "deploying U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea or Japan is preferable" but thinks it is better than the idea of those countries getting an independent nuclear force. There is no sign of his supporting nuclear armament by the U.S. on the Korean peninsula and in Japan. However, enhancing the tension on the peninsula might be very preferable to the translator.

3. Communist President

On March 9, 2018 the BBC released a news article with the headline "Trump and North Korea talks: The political gamble of the 21st century" (Figure 12). Laura Bicker, the BBC correspondent in Seoul was translated as writing in the first part of the article that "South Korean leader Moon Jae-in is either a diplomatic genius or a communist set on destroying his country and U.S. President Donald Trump is either a master of brinkmanship or a pawn in a more devious game - depending on who you speak to." If the part "depending on who you speak to" is omitted, it appears that the writer is partly referring to Mr. Moon as a communist.

[11] Chosun Ilbo's news on William Perry's remark at ACA

FIGURE 12[12]



Of course, many South Korean media outlets picked at the sentence. They singled out "a communist set on destroying his country," referring to President Moon (Figure 13). Dumfounded by South Korean news so wrongly quoting what she wrote, Bicker posted a critical tweet calling upon news outlets to seriously straighten the distortion (Figure 14). She said her article doesn't state that President Moon is a "communist" as some in media reported. She clarified that it is a quote from a Korean right-wing historian. She added "genius" is also a quote from someone else as well.

FIGURE 13[13]

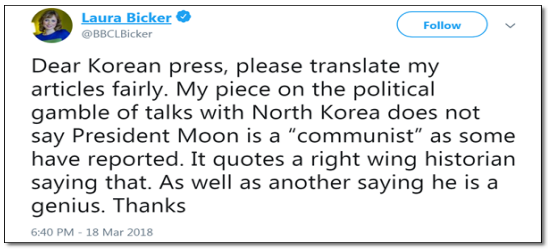


<Brief Translation>
Moon Jae-in could get Nobel Prize if he successfully manages nuclear issue in North Korea. According to BBC, South Korean leader Moon Jae-in is either a diplomatic genius or a communist set on destroying his country.

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12 BBC's news report on the summit between North Korea and the U.S.
13 South Korean media's headline on BBC's news report

FIGURE 14[14]



Surprisingly, the reporters who wrote those translated articles are experts on foreign and diplomatic issues. One only can surmise that they did this intentionally to frame President Moon as putting North first. This frame works especially well with the older generation.

4. Summit about to be Cancelled

One more mistranslation case related to the U.S. and North Korea summit talks occurred on May 23, 2018. YONHAP reported news that caused great disappointment for Korean people. According to this news, President Trump said at the summit meeting to President Moon that his summit talk with Kim Jong Eun would not be held if certain conditions were not met (Figure 15). Indeed, President Trump did mention the possibility of the summit cancellation, but the connotation of meaning is vastly different depending on when and where he talked about it.

[14] A Twitter message of Laura Bicker, a British correspondent

FIGURE 15[15]

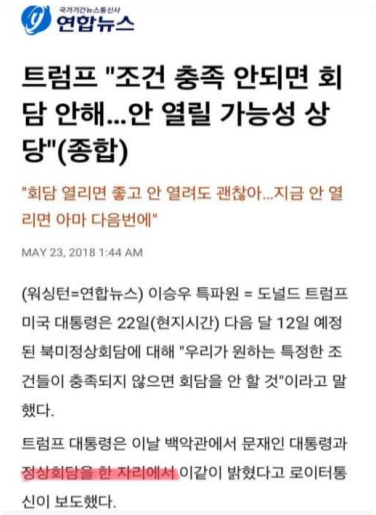


FIGURE 16[16]



**FIGURE 16 is the translation of FIGURE 15, except one phrase highlighted with red "at the summit."*

In fact, Trump spoke to reporters ahead of a meeting with President Moon, not at the meeting. Some may think that it is trivial whether he said this at the meeting with President Moon or ahead of the meeting to reporters. In case of "at the meeting" the weight of his remark is pretty significant and could be considered official, but this is not the case if it was "ahead of meeting" (Figure 16). To reporters, what he said would be a kind of passing remark to avoid raising unnecessary speculations. The Korean writer of the news cunningly twisted the whole connotation of Trump's remark, suggesting that the prospect of the summit was dampening.

5. We Want You to Fail

Misleading translation is also found in Covid-19 related news. As seen in Figure 17, The New York Times released an article with the headline "They Beat Back the Virus (Again and Again and Again)." It obviously indicates three Asian countries (Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan) in the struggle of recalibrating their responses to back to back Covid-19 moves. It simply shows those countries are managing the situation relatively successfully without any insinuation of failing. However, one South Korean media translated the article very differently.

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15 YONHAP's news report on Trump's remark
16 Reuter's news report on Trump's remark

FIGURE 17[17]

They Beat Back the Virus (Again and Again and Again)

Hard-to-trace clusters, along with pandemic fatigue, have forced officials in Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan to keep recalibrating their responses.



A restaurant in Hong Kong with dividers between booths. The city is seeing yet another surge in Covid-19 cases. Lam Yik Fei for The New York Times

FIGURE 18[18]

news1

美유럽 안정되는데 한국·일본·홍콩은 코로나 급증



<Brief Translation>
Corona virus confirmed cases are increasing rapidly in South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong while those in the U.S. and Europe are stabilized (FIGURE 18)

As shown in Figure 18, the headline of the translated article is saying "Corona virus confirmed cases are increasing rapidly in South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong while those in the U.S. and Europe are stabilized." It doesn't say that the countries are making a good fight against Covid-19. Only negative and depressing news is expected when South Korean readers see this headline.

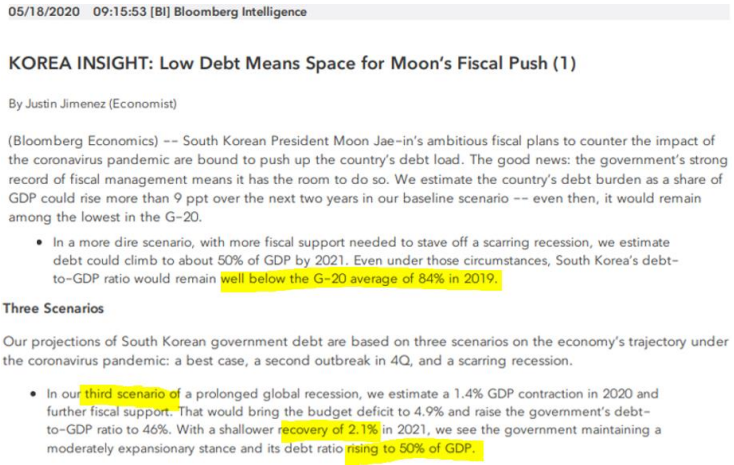
6. Good News in the Shape of Bad News

On May 18, 2020, Bloomberg Intelligence (BI), a research institute of Bloomberg, released a report on the economic prospect of South Korea. As it is indicated in Figure 19, this report forecasts in three possible scenarios. The third one is the scenario of a prolonged global recession, which attracted much attention from South Korean news reporters. BI says, referring to South Korea, "in our third scenario of a prolonged global recession, we estimate a 1.4% GDP contraction in 2020 and further fiscal support. That would bring the budget deficit to 4.9% and raise the government's debt-to-GDP ratio to 46%. With a shallower recovery of 2.1% in 2021, we see the government maintaining a moderately

[17] New York Times's news report on Asian countries' Covid-19 struggle
[18] A South Korean news agency's report on New York Times news report

expansionary stance and its debt ratio rising to 50% of GDP." This is the reiteration of its overall report in the introduction of the report, saying "In a more dire scenario, with more fiscal support needed to stave off a scarring recession, we estimate debt could climb to about 50% of GDP by 2021. Even under those circumstances, South Korea's debt-to-GDP ratio would remain well below the G-20 average of 84% in 2019." Even if they regard the third one as the worst scenario, it doesn't sound pessimistic at all. This report put the emphasis on its 2.1% economic recovery and relatively very low debt-to-GDP ratio even in case of the worst scenario.

FIGURE 19[19]



05/18/2020 09:15:53 [BI] Bloomberg Intelligence

KOREA INSIGHT: Low Debt Means Space for Moon's Fiscal Push (1)

By Justin Jimenez (Economist)

(Bloomberg Economics) -- South Korean President Moon Jae-in's ambitious fiscal plans to counter the impact of the coronavirus pandemic are bound to push up the country's debt load. The good news: the government's strong record of fiscal management means it has the room to do so. We estimate the country's debt burden as a share of GDP could rise more than 9 ppt over the next two years in our baseline scenario -- even then, it would remain among the lowest in the G-20.

- In a more dire scenario, with more fiscal support needed to stave off a scarring recession, we estimate debt could climb to about 50% of GDP by 2021. Even under those circumstances, South Korea's debt-to-GDP ratio would remain well below the G-20 average of 84% in 2019.

Three Scenarios

Our projections of South Korean government debt are based on three scenarios on the economy's trajectory under the coronavirus pandemic: a best case, a second outbreak in 4Q, and a scarring recession.

- In our third scenario of a prolonged global recession, we estimate a 1.4% GDP contraction in 2020 and further fiscal support. That would bring the budget deficit to 4.9% and raise the government's debt-to-GDP ratio to 46%. With a shallower recovery of 2.1% in 2021, we see the government maintaining a moderately expansionary stance and its debt ratio rising to 50% of GDP.

However, most of South Korean media reported in unison that "Bloomberg's warning: South Korea's debt-to-GDP would reach 50% next year" (Figure 20). They made the prospect of South Korean financial situation look negative by cutting some parts out of the news story. They ignored the possible positive consequence of debt increase: 2.1% of economy recovery. Even a word that is not found in the BI report, 'warning' was used to make it sound very urgent and serious.

[19] Bloomberg Intelligence's report on South Korean economy prospect

FIGURE 20[20]



<Brief Translation>
Bloomberg's warning: South Korea's debt-to-GDP would reach 50% next year.

7. Confirmation Bias

Here is an interesting case of misinformation because of certain cultural or contextual illiteracy due to the language barrier. After the general election in April, 2020, a certain company posted a news-like article under the name "Press Release" on USA TODAY, contending that the result of South Korea's general election is "likened to 1,000 coins all landing on heads." This article with its intriguing title was too attractive to pass by for a passionate veteran journalist of MBC, a major TV broadcasting company. She presented this article on her Facebook page as a supporting idea of a recent 'rigged election.'

FIGURE 21[21]



<Brief Translation>
A news article on recent rigged general election in South Korea was released in 'USA Today' which is national level major newspaper. I can feel its significance because I had worked international division for a while.

The problem is that the section of the newspaper in which this article was posted, as shown above the title, is the "Classifieds" section. It means the provider of the article paid for publishing it. This section is available in any American newspaper and one can post

[20] South Korean media's headlines on Bloomberg Intelligence's report
[21] A senior South Korean journalist's Facebook message

almost anything one desires as long as it is paid for. Literally, since it is so obviously a classified advertising section, it is still hard to understand how an experienced journalist misrepresented this absurdity. She must be either blinded by confirmation bias or confused by misunderstanding because of her lack of English proficiency with cultural or contextual illiteracy.

IV. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

Generally, if disinformation is to be plausible, it should meet certain conditions. There are many of these, but three things could be counted as essential (Buchanan, 2020). First, it should be consistent with people's pre-existing beliefs. In the context of disinformation, this could make it desirable to target audiences sympathetic to the message content. The second is consensus, which is the extent to which people think their behavior would be consistent with that of most other people. The information should be widely shared because that makes people more likely to forward it on themselves. The third is authority. People are likely to believe the information if it comes from a trustworthy source.

According to a research study (Kim, Moravec & Dennis, 2019), more than 60% of adults get news from social media, so it is not an exaggeration to say that disinformation, in most cases, is circulated via social media platforms under the conditions explained above. Additional, exaggerated, and distorted information is added in the process of circulation. However, disinformation caused by mistranslation should be looked upon differently. As translated news appears in mainstream media it gets stronger authority than other news because, regardless whether it is mistranslation or not, most readers can't check it right away and tend to believe what journalists have translated it to be. For those who are not good at foreign languages the journalists' translations plays a huge role in providing authority. However, there have been many incidental or intentional disinformation or fake news found, and the public have become suspicious of the credibility of news reports or articles. This suspicion has made them investigate further even when the news article originated from reliable news sources abroad. Thanks to the level of foreign language (mostly English) proficiency of young readers, falsely translated news has been more easily discerned.

As previously noted, a legendary disinformation due to mistranslation was produced when a journalist translated "long gas lines forming…" in one of President Trump's twitter messages (Figure 8, 9). At that time in 2017, there was much tension between North Korea and the U.S. over nuclear force in North Korea. South Korea was having difficult time flattening the surging rage level between them. President Trump who was politically outspoken on his twitter account was busy mocking North Korea with frequent messages.

Most of South Korean major news media are very critical of the current government because this liberal government has never done them any unnecessary favors that they have taken for granted under conservative governments. These days it is increasingly difficult to find news written with neutral positions to the information presented. It seems that they don't want to see the Moon administration make any significant progress with tangible results. They often frame that the South Korea-U.S. alliance has become fragile since President Moon took power. In the middle of searching for evidence that shows the relationship between the two countries has become estranged, some journalists ran across Trump's twitter message saying he called Moon regarding North Korea situation. When they saw "Too bad!" they jumped to an assumption that some kind of confrontational mood was fostered during two leaders' phone conversation. They presented with assurance that President Moon must have secretly arranged with North Korea, without any notification to the U.S., to construct a natural gas pipeline thought to come from Russia below North Korea, which made President Trump angry. "Long gas lines" was used by Trump to make fun of gas shortage symbolizing North Korea's serious economic situation because of the sanction placed on them. However, the journalists of South Korea, who translated the message, misused this material to criticize Moon administration's presumably failing policy toward the U.S. As a result, they ended up embarrassing themselves.

As more similar cases appear, the public is now very suspicious of journalists' mistranslations that don't look like mistakes at all. They quoted William Perry, a former U.S. Secretary of Defense, as if he advocated the idea of Korean peninsula getting nuclear independence by misunderstanding a pronoun and a preposition in a sentence (Figure 10, 11). And sometimes, they quoted a foreign correspondent who had quoted a scholar's remark as if the correspondent actually uttered the quote (Figure 12, 13, 14). The word "communist" that Laura Bicker mentioned was not exactly what she said, but South Korean news writers arbitrarily took that part only and enjoyed calling President Moon a communist, wishing him frustration in helping North Korea and the U.S. summit. Calling liberal political figures communist is the easiest way to frame them and raise the red phobia among older generation who directly or indirectly experienced Korean War. It still partly works. Another case is even more interesting. It was hard to call it a mistranslation. They replaced a chunk of phrase with different one (Figure 15, 16) to suggest different connotation. Sustaining tension on the Korean peninsula is enhancing the possibility of the current administration's political failure in managing the relationship with North Korea. Even a slight sign of a negative prospect was an abundant resource for writing a news article on Singapore summit with a pessimistic tone. They translated President Trump's remark on the possibility of a summit cancellation as if he said it at the meeting with President Moon. In fact, he said it to the reporters ahead of the meeting not to President Moon.

Since Covid-19 broke out to a full-fledged phase in early 2020, the number of confirmed cases and the number of the dead has rapidly increased all over the world. South Korea was the only country other than China with more Coronavirus cases in early 2020, but now it is widely praised for its management of the outbreak and the spread of the virus thanks to effective testing and tracing systems (Sonn, 2020). The content and the title "They Beat Back the Virus (Again and Again and Again)" (Figure 17) clearly show the country is having a tough fight but a good fight against the virus. Still things are not easy. For much of the year, South Korea has beaten back repetitive surges of virus cases, nevertheless, compared with the U.S. and Europe, South Korea still has the virus in check (Ives, May, & Inoue, 2020). However, the translated article (Figure 18) says the exact opposite. They misrepresented that beating back the virus repeatedly means losing control of the virus to them.

The Covid-19 pandemic is not only claiming people's health and lives but also bringing their economic activity to a near-standstill. The economic damage is already evident and represents the largest economic shock the world has experienced in decades. In spite of the deepest global recession in decades, South Korea's economy is expected to grow, underscoring that economic success seems to go hand in hand with success in curving down the pandemic in this Covid-19 era. According to OECD's projection, South Korea will be the second-best performer among major economies behind only China (Larson, 2020). As President Moon Jae-in said, South Korea is walking "a tightrope between virus control and the economy," taking aggressive fiscal measures of pouring significant amount of capital into the pockets of businesses and citizens (YONHAP, 2020). Since South Korea has kept the fiscal taps open, deficit hawks are worried about the sustainability of big fiscal stimulus packages that can relieve short-term pain but only at the cost of long-term debt accumulation. However, as shown in the report of BI, South Korea would perform relatively well with a decent economic growth rate of 2.1%, even if its debt-to-GDP rate may reach around 50% (Figure 19) next year. The journalists who translated the information in this report and synthesized it in their news article wanted to put all the emphasis on the "50%," projected debt-to-GDP rate of the next year. They ignored the "2.1%" projected economic growth part and never included in their news article (Figure 20). They did their best to make South Korea's economic prospects look bleak, insinuating the current government's economic policy is failing.

On April 15, 2020 South Korea's ruling party won a landslide victory in national assembly elections, in what is being seen as an endorsement of President Moon Jae-in's response to the coronavirus pandemic (McCurry, 2020). The Democratic party and its similar affiliate won 180 seats in the 300-seat assembly. This is the biggest majority in the national assembly by any party since South Korea's transition to democracy in 1987. The conservative opposition parties were simultaneously puzzled and shocked by the result.

They went into a self-denial phase and began to develop a conspiracy theory: there was election fraud. A variety of conspiracies has emerged to the surface but nothing is concrete and plausible yet (Go & Lee, 2020). Among these nonsensical theories is one about a senior journalist who had worked for one of the well-known broadcasting companies and brought up an issue by quoting an article published in USA Today, a major American newspaper (Figure 21). As explained in the section above, what she found was not an article but a post in the "Classifieds" section where anyone can post opinions or advertisements if they pay. Regardless of its contents, being in the classifieds section itself means this English article is not credible as news or as an editorial at all. Did she really think it is a normal news article released in a national level daily newspaper? Her right-leaning nature has been revealed on many occasions. Her candid Facebook write-ups and behavior have shown how deep her hatred against the current government and President Moon really is. It is likely that this is not the case of mistranslation or misunderstanding at all. As such, it is the case of her hatred that blinded her rational and logical thinking processes.

V. CONCLUSION

The issue of disinformation or fake news has gained attention from the public, and people seek explanations for its cause. Based on examples explained previously, two general underlying causes are easily inferred in the context of South Korea. First, disinformation or fake news can be articulated as intrinsically connected to capitalism. A widespread explanation raised by scholars, journalists, and commentators alike points to the economic structure of the media as the primary reason for the circulation of disinformation (Filloux, 2016; Silverman & Alexander, 2016; Zimdars, 2016a, 2016b). As in all commercial media, content providers generate advertisement revenue based on the amount of readers, listeners or viewers they have. If news articles can attract a lot of visitors, the news company can potentially make money on advertisements. Disinformation or fake news raises controversy that generates ratings. "Controversy is generated around the facts vs. propaganda battle" (Papacharissi, 2016). According to this discourse, false information feeds controversy and controversy feeds capital. Provocative headlines with twisted contents attract more clicks and are read more. If their contents become popular, they may easily attract big advertisement orders from big business, like Samsung, LG, and Hyundai.

The second cause seems to be stronger than the first one in South Korea. Almost every disinformation or fake news these days are for diminishing public trust toward the current government. The disinformation trend in South Korea now is mainly a political construct

created to attack and delegitimize the current government and President Moon Jae-in. South Korea's mainstream media is seriously biased. Mistranslation is a very new way of making false information. People can be very gullible unless they read news stories critically or check original foreign news articles. Most of the mainstream media, regardless of their political stance, have launched all-out offensives on the government from its beginning. They don't want to see a peaceful era coming to the Korean peninsula and resort to distorting the issue of North and the U.S. summit cancellation, calling their President a communist. They don't want to acknowledge how wonderfully the government is managing Covid-19 pandemic without serious economic setback. Moreover, people's choice for lawmakers was unbelievable to them and they are still devastated. To understand South Korea's current one-sided media atmosphere, one needs to consider innumerable historical and political layers that have been accumulated for a long time under it. This brief paper only can provide a chance to take a glance at how interestingly disinformation has evolved in the way that is beyond plausibility. Some certainly think that if this mode of disinformation circulation continues, it would confuse people's decision making and hinder the work of government, thus worsening political division. However, others likely think that it doesn't matter because it is a normal social phenomenon open societies are supposed to face, saying people believe what they want to believe when it makes no sense at all.

VI. POSTSCRIPT

Lastly, this is not included as a cause of disinformation in general but could be applied to mistranslation cases in terms that South Korean journalists' foreign language proficiency, especially English proficiency, is simply at a substandard level. Most origins of mistranslated articles are written in English. It seems to be inevitable to talk about English education. Those who mistranslated articles probably passed cut-throat competitions to be journalists of major media. Taking English tests is one of the essential parts of the competition. It means they have invested their ample time in English learning. What happened to their English? Despite their huge investment and educational zeal, the English language skills of South Korea's adults have not improved and have remained at a moderate level according to many surveys and reports (Yeo, 2020). It will be seen as a disappointing result for the country considering the significant amount of time and money spent on English education. There have been lingering problems since English education began in late 19th century in Korea: incompetent teachers, students losing interest and confidence, initiation of policy making by outsiders, obstructionist myths about English and English learning held by people, difficult college entrance exam oriented education, less emphasis on oral proficiency, and so on. Of course, things have changed as the society

has changed. More English native teachers are coming in; time for being exposed to English has increased for learners; and oral proficiency is being emphasized. Positive changes have been made still with existing problems. Even though the CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test) English test level is so high that even native speakers of English have hard time to solve the problems, the English proficiency level of general college freshmen who passed the exam is just moderate. Likewise, those who have dreamed of being journalists of major media pass a highly competitive test but still reveal their absurd level of English skill judged on many cases of news article mistranslation. How ironic it is! It is bitter and amusing at the same time to see embedded problems in English education detected in the course of South Korean journalists mistranslating news articles written in English.

There have been many research studies criticizing South Korean English education in terms of its inefficient practice and relatively few achievements, but they couldn't present optimal solutions. They only say, as Kwon (2007) said, "if ELT (English Language Teaching) professionals are to accomplish their mission to renovate English education in Korea, they should respond to the above challenges. Educational innovations and renovations need orchestrated efforts by the government, the ELT professionals, the society, the parents, and the students. More than ever before, the Korean ELT professionals are challenged with the mission to initiate and coordinate their efforts to improve English education" (p. 15). However, as more occasions, like mistranslation of new articles, through which we can reflect upon ourselves are found, there will be more chances to figure out the solutions. Nothing seems to be significantly improved, but certainly, progress is still being made thanks to the swarm of intelligence among South Korean citizens.

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Examples in: English
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