

Why do I feel uncomfortable when I write in a digital space?

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter1. Language standardization

1-1. Standardization of language

1-2. Language uniformity in digital space

Chapter2. Frabjousish as a linguistic resistance

2-1. The Looking-Screen World and Frabjousish

2-2. Writing invitation letter to the Looking-Screen World

Chapter3. Other strategies

3-1. Untranslatable Dictionary

3-2. Collaborative translation

3-3. Collaborative writing

Conclusion

References

Images

Colophon

Introduction

Someone who writes expresses something. (...) Introspection permits us to say that the one writing is pressing a virtuality hidden within him out through numerous layers of resistance. “What virtualities?” is a bad question at this point, for this virtuality will only be realized in the written text. The answer is the text, which is not known beforehand to the one writing. In fact, the gesture of writing is the answer to the question “What am I trying to express?”

(Flusser, 2014, p.21)

I’m sitting in front of my laptop with ingredients in my head to write this thesis. In order that these ‘virtualities’ validate my master’s degree, I make my references and considerations pass through three layers; “Causal thinking”, “Linear writing structure” and “Writing in Standard language”. But as a non-native English user, my idea still has a layer to cross, “Writing in Standard English language.”

Although I’m not confident enough with my English, (theoretically) I do not need to worry that much. Apple Predictive Text™ handles tricky spellings, Google Translate™ saves effort to consult the dictionary word by word and Grammarly™ checks my grammar mistakes. Those digital linguistic assistants provide me round the clock free service. Moreover, the efficiency of their performance is verified by language experts. A professor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Writing Center, Dorothy Mayne, advocates the use of Grammarly. She may hate those tools because they would replace her job and they still make some mistakes. But she acknowledges their efficiency, saying “the student can use Grammarly to reduce their total number of errors” (Mayne, 2021) and using the application as teaching material.

Now, I finished my two paragraphs with the help of AI-powered digital assistants. I expect that my writing should be an augmented version of my rough voice, as Flusser said, and it should be spoken in perfect English, as Grammarly promises in its advertisement. I read my corrected writing aloud. I find several grammar mistakes, but they do not bother me. Instead, I feel warm to the human side of AI and the sense of kinship with another amateur English speaker.

I continue. Strangely, the more I read, the more I feel

unfamiliar with my own writing. Does the Apple Predictive Text address the confusing or difficult spelling? Do I want my writing to feel formal or familiar? What is the motivation for their writing suggestions? Is it because my writing ability has a problem or is free digital services actually bait to make me write as programmers and their employers want?

After much consideration, I conclude that my discomfort comes from digital writing tools. They believe that they know better what I want to say than I do. This arrogance comes from the fact that AI assistants are based on large linguistic models of native English users.

However, I would say No. What matters for these applications is not whether my sentence is meaningful or not, but whether it meets the regulations made by their creators. If I write like a Korean woman who learned French and English at school by Korean teachers, is my language problematic? Do I deserve to be convicted as a linguistic criminal? Those virtual assistants tell me, “My foreign friend, your sentence looks not bad, but still has problems. But do not worry, I can HELP you to avoid breaking linguistic laws.”

My language is gaslighted! An anecdote of Timnit Gebru supports my argument.

Gebru was a former Google linguistic AI developer and at the same time, the co-leader of a group at the company that studies the social and ethical ramifications of artificial intelligence. As a part of her research in her latter group, she wrote a paper *On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big?* and mentioned, “The training data has been shown to have problematic characteristics resulting in models that encode stereotypical and derogatory association along gender, race, ethnicity, and disability status.” (Gebru, 2021, p.613) This made upset her boss and as a result, Gebru lost her job. (Simonite, 2021)

I’m writing this thesis to protect my right to write as I wish in digital space. In particular, I identify the menace that the individual written expressions of non-native English users are facing. I wish to express that I have no enmity against English itself, but the supremacy of Standard English idolised by the most commonly available digital language tools.

My thesis is complementary to my graduation project. It documents the counter-hegemonic gestures enacted by my graduation project and provides theoretical nourishment. In my graduation project, I am creating an alternative online universe, *the Looking-Screen World* that welcomes anyone who has

¹ A compound word of Frabjous (an invented word by Lewis Carroll; fair, fabulous and joyous) and ish (suffix meaning relating to)

been embarrassed by their non-standard language use, such as mispronunciation, misuse of words and grammar errors. Users are invited to collectively make the common language of this universe, *Frabjousish*¹, using our “linguistic crime” against standard language as a source.

Back again to this thesis, I will contextualise the concept of language hegemony and the development of potential strategies to subvert this.

The first chapter is about why the distinction between wrong and correct language exists in history, real-life and digital space. I will discuss their common cause, capitalism which is another form of hegemony, and other social backgrounds.

The next chapter is dedicated to my graduation project. I will explain what Frabjousish is and how different it is from other alternative languages. And then, through the writing of an invitation letter to participate in my graduation project, I will illustrate the threats that my writing voice has been encountering in a digital environment.

Finally, I will present possible strategies against these digital menaces; a collection of untranslatable vocabulary, collective translation and collective writing. I will explain the reason why I anticipate collective writing as the savior of digital writing.

Chapter 1.

Language standardization

² 'Hand writing' of the author is more appropriate in this context, but I personally prefer 'autography' for the rhyme. Orthography, autography and creativity.

³ Translation in Standard English: In the 21st century, no one considers this sentence as a reflection of my writing style.

We have been using language for a long time, but the idea of “correct” language is not that old. Before the standardization of language in the 16th century in Europe, there was no linguistic rule to follow, in other words, no criteria to judge one’s language. For example, French authors before the 16th century made their own decision for orthography. It varied depending on the author’s region, period, personal preference and value. As an example, translator Susan Baddeley said in her thesis, the choice of “I” and “Y” was left to the appreciation of the writer; both “ami” and “amy” were acceptable. (Baddeley, 2012, p.100) So, I would say that at that time, orthography was the synonym of autography² and creativity of the author. Because, through the choice of orthography, the author could express themselves, which is directly related to their creativity.

1-1. Standard language in real life

Yn 21st centuri, no one consyder thys sentence as a reflection of mi wrytyng stile³.

Instead, people will be embarrassed by my meaningless rebellion. According to linguist James Milroy (2012, p.16) in his book *Authority in Language*, standard language aims at the language efficiency. Everyone is supposed to speak and write in the same way to minimize misunderstanding and maximize the efficiency in political, economical and social communications. In this point of view, otherness in spelling, grammar and pronunciation let others waste their time and it is irresponsible behavior as a grown-up. Thus, I ought to use the standard language.

However, I object that most people, except some sociolinguists, educators and grouches like me, do not take into account the disadvantage of language standardisation. Milroy said (1987, p.22) “The ideology of standardisation (...) tends to blind us to the somewhat ill-defined nature of a standard language and may have some undesirable consequences in that it leads to oversimplified views of the nature of language.” People use the standard language as a criterion for language correctness and in my experience, a criterion for social discrimination. In particular, they immediately differentiate between them and me by my spoken language.

When I began my architecture study at university in Seoul, I spoke in a light dialect from the northernmost region in South Korea. Although that was slight differences in accent and

vocabulary, my new classmates and professors living in the capital were surprised by my speech. Because firstly, for standard Korean users, my dialect was associated with the political vulnerability of my region. They were reminded by my accent of North Korea's several military provocations to my home region and so they worried⁴ about the security of my family. Secondly, my accent made professors believe that I would struggle to become a trendy architect, because of the economical undevelopment in my region. And ultimately, for them, my language demonstrates that I am an "uncultivated person"⁵. As a result, I abandoned my old habit.

⁴ Actually, North Korea has threatened Seoul suburbs as much as my region. Due to the lack of economic infrastructures, their attacks on my hometown caused minor damage to the South than attacks on the capital. Capital people pretend to worry about the security of my region, but it is nothing other than an excuse to distinguish us from them.

⁵ On 19th January 1988, the Korean Education Minister defined the standard Korean as "the widely used language by cultivated people in Seoul."

For Korean people, the standardisation of the Korean language is a historically significant event. From the ancient period until the 19th century, Chinese dynasties forced Korean ancestors to use Chinese characters and during Japanese Imperialism, the Korean language was banned (Yeon, 2012, p.17). After the liberation from Japan in 1945 and the Korean War in 1954, North and South Korea separately structured Standard Korean as a part of the recovery movement of ethnic identity. There were some differences like northern people tried to represent their communist ideology in their language and resist more actively against loan words. But commonly two nations regulated words and expressions influenced by China and Japan.

It was a meaningful linguistic purism. But in terms of thinning out the dialects, I would appeal to stop it. We should stop treating them like bastards of national enemies. Yeon, a Korean linguist, concluded his thesis, "although some differences are found in the fields of morphology, phonetics, phonology and stylistics we conclude that the extent of differentiation can not reverse the belief in the homogeneity of the North and South Korean language." (2012, p.17) I would recall that the variation in language can not cut Korea into small pieces and dialects are rather an evidence of the abundance of the Korean language.

Actually, we can easily find another unreasonable linguistic reduction in the example of foreign language proficiency tests. In the case of IELTS, the International English Language Testing System managed by Cambridge University and the British Council, which is one of the most internationally used English tests, people's speaking ability is examined on four criteria: fluency and accuracy; vocabulary; grammar and pronunciation, like in Image 1. And pronunciation means the clear enunciation of individual sounds, connected speech, rhythm, word, and sentence stress, chunking, and intonation

(British Council India, 2021). If my pronunciation is “Effortless to understand,” I get nine, the best score, and eight if I make a few lapses.

IELTS™				
SPEAKING: Band Descriptors (public version)				
Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features develops topics fully and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety sustains flexible use of features throughout is effortless to understand
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language develops topics coherently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies uses paraphrase effectively as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures flexibly produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of pronunciation features sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices uses paraphrase effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies generally paraphrases successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice rarely attempts paraphrase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a limited range of pronunciation features attempts to control features but lapses are frequent mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks with long pauses has limited ability to link simple sentences gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pauses lengthily before most words little communication possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only produces isolated words or memorised utterances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot produce basic sentence forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speech is often unintelligible
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no communication possible no rateable language 			
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not attend 			

IELTS is jointly owned by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge Assessment English.

Page 1 of 1

Image 1. IELTS speaking part scoring criterion (IELTS, no date)

Here, I throw doubt. Milroy (1987, p.19) said that written English, vocabulary and grammar, was relatively easy to standardise, but standardisation of spoken language is never achieved due to a variety of different accents. Then, what kind of standards do IELTS base their score on? How can we distinguish lapses? What is the standard for the non-standard existing scope? According to the IELTS Examiner recruitment website (IELTS, no date), the examiners should pass the “Standardisation certificate” every two years and demonstrate that they can apply the assessment criteria accurately. But, this standard remains Cambridge University’s standard. It is such a pity that in spite of this exam’s defect, the immigration offices of English-speaking countries and many universities require its score to prove one’s English Proficiency.

1-2. Language uniformity in digital space

To write the paragraphs above, I googled “IELTS speaking

⁶ When I visit a website, browsing information remains in my computer or google account. Cookies are files including this information and this permits websites (in my case, Youtube) to give me locally relevant content (Google Chrome Help, no date).

⁷ In 2020, Elsa Speak and IDP, co-owner of IELTS, established their official partnership. That means the organisation of IELTS admits Elsa Speak as an efficient tool for the preparation of the language test (Elsa Speak Blog, 2020).

part” quite a lot of time. Those cookies⁶ made Youtube believe that I’m looking for an IELTS-speaking tutor. And now, Youtube is showing me the advertisement for ELSA Speak™, English Language Speech Assistant, a mobile speech recognition application funded by Google for \$3.2 million. ELSA is able to estimate users’ IELTS-speaking part⁷ scores and provide a customized real-time learning plan. Its founder, Vu Van, originally from Vietnam, confesses suffering from her spoken English during her first year at Stanford University. As a solution, she developed in 2016 and proudly presented it: “ELSA listens to the way language learners pronounce words or sentences to pinpoint exact errors and provide real-time, accurate feedback on their mistakes, with specific suggestions on how to move their tongues and their lips in different positions so they can improve those pronunciation errors” (Mulia, 2020).

I’m just hooked and I download the application. The first step is a level test.

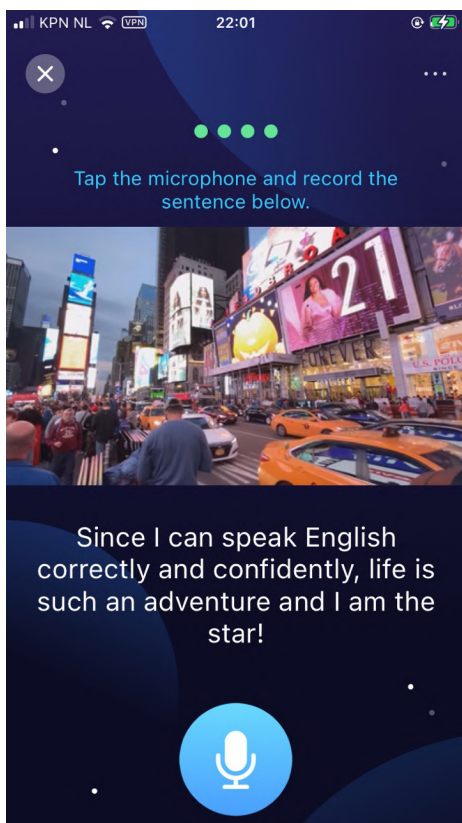


Image 2. Screen capture of Elsa speak level test (left)

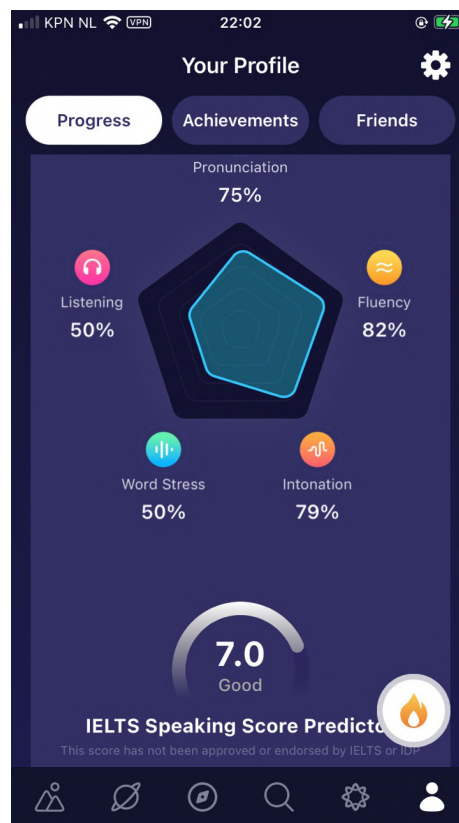


Image 3. Screen capture of my level test result (middle)

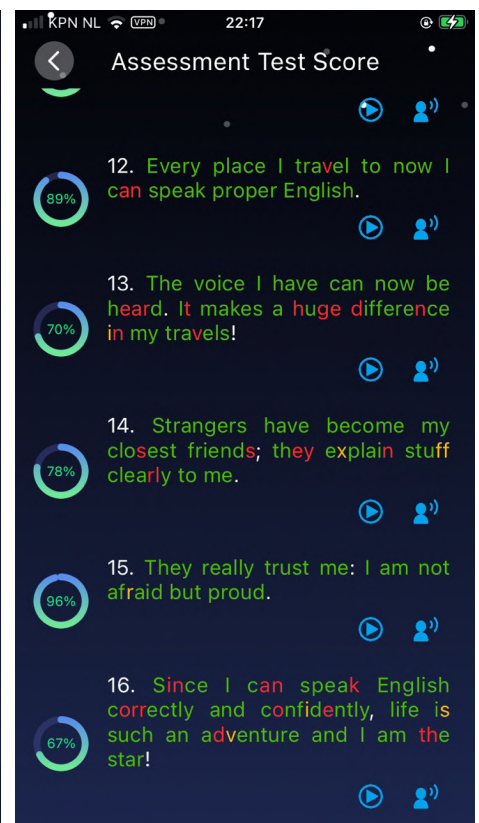


Image 4. Screen capture of detailed test result (right)

I read aloud sixteen pre-prepared sentences, which seem like I would never use during a language test nor during my entire life. And ELSA diagnoses that 33% of my reading in the last sentence is wrong. Honestly, the 7.0 in IELTS is pretty satisfactory for me, but I dare say it is wrong. Firstly, the scoring process is flawed. As we can find in Image 2, in measuring speaking ability, a rich vocabulary and accuracy in grammar matter as much as pronunciation and fluency. But in this test, I was asked only to read out

sentences I did not construct myself. So this application did not get enough information to judge my speaking ability. Then, Van would rebut, “A report suggests that people who speak English well with a clean accent earn 40% more than those who do not,” as she mentioned in the same article above (Mulia, 2020). But I would ask her what a “clean” accent is and if earning more money is more valuable than conserving my own voice.

Secondly, let’s take a look at its slogan, “Your personal AI-powered English speaking coach”. Some people would have greater trust in an AI-powered coach than a human one. They might believe that the machine is able to assess objectively ability and has more extensive knowledge. But, for me, “AI-powered” provides a hint to understanding whose language this application wants me to parrot.

“AI-powered” signifies the use of the English Automatic-Speech-Recognition AI system. In this software, each language use example by a standard English user is mapped into a data point. And the machine has a massive accumulation of these data points, a dataset. In the case of ELSA, the software is using the audio dataset called the acoustic model. And then, my pronunciation is compared with this dataset. Alongside verbal English, this AI system is trained in how standard English users write; this is called a language model (Raju, 2019). This textual dataset allows us to examine the probability of word usage, which means the AI can predict an accurate word in the text context. For example, AI knows this sentence “Toni Morrison won the Nobel” will finish with “prize”, not with “dries” which has similar acoustic information.

The most important key to making this AI accurate is training it in lots of human language use examples, i.e., having a bigger language model. One of the famous language models, GPT-3™, is released by Elon-Musk-founded AI research lab OpenAI in 2020. It is known for its human-like language use⁸ and its heaviness, 570GB which is equivalent to 100,000 copies of the Bible (Gebru, 2021, p.611). This digital language system is used in many digital technologies and has been penetrating deeper and deeper into our daily life. Alexa™, Amazon’s voice-based AI-powered digital assistant, tells us today’s weather, GPT-2™ rewrites the ending part of *Game of Thrones*¹⁰ and digital writing assistants intervene in my writing.

Unfortunately, for most often used language models, that “bigger” does not include the notion of “diversity”. Gebru, who worked for Google language AI, but lost her job after revealing the danger of a large language model, points out that there is inequality in Internet access. The language of young users

⁸ Arram Sabeti, an influential developer and artist, posted, “Playing with GPT-3 feels like seeing the future.” on his Twitter (Sabeti, 2020).

⁹ The previous version of GPT-3. It was launched in 2019 and is lighter than the next version, 40GB. But still, its amount means the Reddit posts of 70000 volumes of The Bible.

¹⁰ Its ending disappointed lots of its fans. So, many people rewrite it. GPT-2 is one of the most famous fanfiction writers (Trivedi, 2019).

from developed countries has more chances to be served as a language model. Also, there is a bias in language user samples. In the case of GPT-2 language model, the machine is nourished by Reddit posts. According to Pew Internet Research's 2016 survey, 67% of its users are male and 64% are between the ages of 18 and 29 in the United States (quoted in Gebru, 2021, p.613). At this point, I would ask why. Why Reddit? Because it is free to use? Because the majority of its users are privileged and OpenAI believes that their language is the most ideal?

I must be happy if I can have the English pronunciation easier to understand to others. But, I do not ask to be a young American man.

Chapter 2.

Frabjousish as a linguistic resistance

2-1. What is Frabjousish?

I'm trying to overcome those linguistic injustices presented in the first chapter by collectively making a language, *Frabjousish*, and creating a digital space in which to use this language, *the Looking-Screen World*. In my virtual universe, the user participates in contributing to the Frabjousish lexicon and plays a language game.

Frabjousish is made of second language users' slips of the tongue. Someone may intend to say "word A", but due to one's clumsy English, artistic spirit or simple mistake, replace it with "word B". In reality, the word B is supposed to be deleted. But, in my virtual universe, the word A and B have equal values as an ingredient to make a word A'. For instance, one user confessed his "Native and Negative confusion" anecdote on my project (Lee, 2021). In frabjousish process, we abandon their common syllable "tive" and borrow "Na", the first syllable of native, and "Ga", the last syllable of negative. The portmanteau word¹¹ "Naga" replaces "Native".

¹¹ In *Through the Looking-glass*, Humpty Dumpty explains to Alice, "You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word." (Carroll, 1871, p.83) Frabjous is also a portmanteau word.

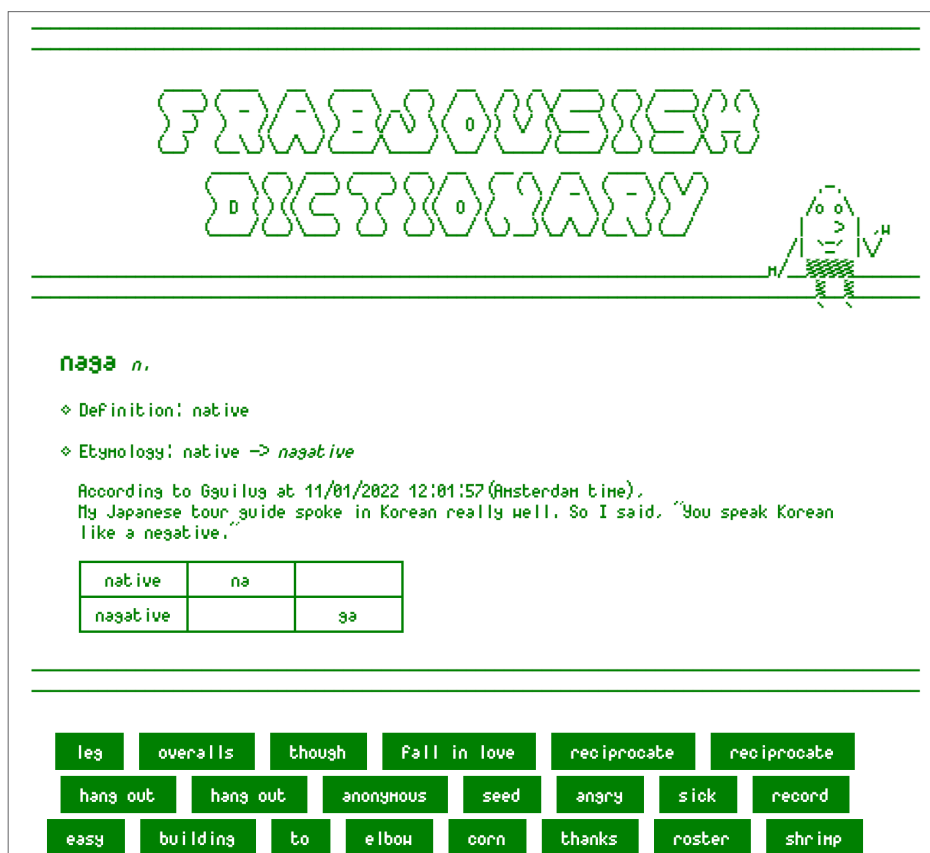


Image 5. Frabjousish web dictionary (sketch)

¹² Any expression representing an aversion against a particular group, such as "chinese whisper game", "russian scandal" or "téléphone arabe (arabic telephone in French)" is strongly prohibited in the Looking-Screen World.

Then, from "Naga", Frabjousish people can play the telephone game¹². Image 6 demonstrates how the game works.

Firstly, I asked a friend to pronounce "Frabjousish". The second friend could not see the original spelling and she wrote down the letters as she heard. The third pronounced the previous

person's spelling. The game continues and finally, our alternative language is extended to "Feel bird sheep." Now, frabjousish has four ways of pronunciation and four spelling variations. None of them is considered wrong. Instead, when a user clicks on the Frabjousish dictionary's pronunciation button, one of four pronunciations is played randomly. And spellings will exist inside parenthesis as possible variations, like center(centre) in the English dictionary.

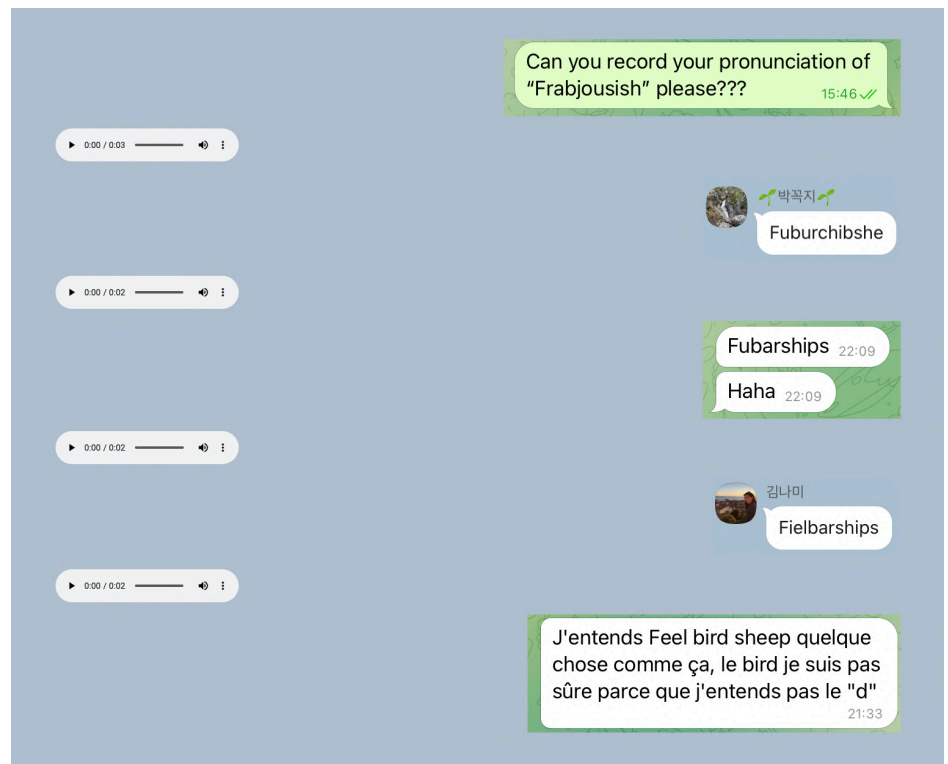


Image 6. *Frabjousish* telephone game with the word "Frabjousish" (sketch)

Similarly to Esperanto and Tokipona, Frabjousish is an artificial language hoping for linguistic peace. Toki pona was invented in 2001 by Sonja Lang, a Canadian linguist. There are 120 essential words and the rest are explained by mixing them, like 'wile moku', hungry in tokipona, means 'want eat' (Glosbe, no date). But my suggestion is to fight against a different enemy. While Esperanto and Tokipona resist "existing standard languages" and their creators invented their own language structures, Frabjousish denies the notion of "standard" itself. Language users usually follow preset linguistic rules. In contrast, Frabjousish users do not obey and do not have any regulation. Anyone can set the word to be used by everyone and equally has the right to modify the word.

Also, Frabjousish may be misunderstood as a sort of Pidgin or Creole Language, because these languages are mostly made by non-native speakers of an imposed language. I strongly emphasize that those differ in the process and purpose of creation. Pidgin and Creole languages were born during

¹³ The ancestor of Mauritian creoles were slaves from different parts of Africa and Madagascar, brought there between 1715 and 1810, during the French colonisation. Each group has its own ethnic language (Eriksen, 1999, p.3).

¹⁴ Most of the Mauritians speak Mauritian Creole, a French-based Creole. However, English is the official language of government and education. (Language Centre Resources of University of Cambridge, no date) But, since 2012, Mauritian Creole has been introduced in primary school as an optional language. And in February 2022, Akademi Kreol Repiblik Moris organised a round table about increasing the importance of the Creole language at school. (Le Mauricien, 2022)

the colonial European plantation settlements in the 17th and 18th centuries (Mufwene, no date). During that period, European exploiters enslaved the Indigenous people. These native people needed to communicate with slave owners, sometimes with other enslaved people from different ethnic groups¹³. Thus, they mixed a foreign language with their language or other languages. The mixed language tends to have simplified structures and a relatively short history, many linguists dismissed it as a marginal language (Godman, 2021) and still, generally governments of former colonies do not use these as an official language¹⁴.

However, Frabjousish is created to oppose hegemony and refuses language hierarchy.

The division between “correct” and “wrong” words in reality is demolished and those words collaborate to make a new word.

In summary, Frabjousish:

1. promotes language equality
2. refuses any form of language rule.
3. is made by the linguistic crime of non-native speakers.

In the following sections, I will prepare an invitation letter to promote confessing slips of tongues, which is often treated as a language crime. The more language criminals in real life participate, the richer Frabjousish becomes.

Originally written in Korean, I will translate it into English with the help of digital writing assistants; Google Translate, Apple Predictive Text and Grammarly to demonstrate.

2-2. Writing invitation letter to the Looking-Screen World

I think in Korean, thus, I write in Korean like in Image 7. I will upload this letter on my graduation project website to show a lot of people. But immediately, I change my mind and decide to translate it into English.

The first reason is I want also to invite second-language users who do not know Korean.

Secondly, I can not publish my letter in Korean on the website, as you can see in Image 8.

The “basic” character set of HTML includes Latin alphabet letters, numbers and punctuation marks. As Korean characters are not part of them, I should declare that I want to

To my friend beyond the screen,

You, too, must have made other people laugh, bewildered, or angry with speech mistakes you made while talking in a foreign language. I'm a native Korean speaker and I've had quite a few experiences like that because I've learned English and French in Korea. I once offered a "unanimous" vote instead of an "anonymous" vote, and often can't tell the difference between the pronunciation of "sheet" and "shit".

Should I be ashamed? But is there such a thing as "right" language? Does anyone have the power to condemn me as a languagebreaker?

I confess, "I was ashamed and believed that." At least until you discover the country beyond the screen. Here, the land beyond the screen is a digital virtual space inspired by Lewis Carroll's novel, Alice in Wonderland.

When I first arrived here, all the people of Propjushi* welcomed me with open arms. and i

When I found out that I was from the real world, I asked them if they had ever experienced "Speech Mistake," a terrifying urban legend**. Hearing my anecdotes, a Propjushishi came forward. Then he shouted in a contemptuous voice, "I decide the meaning of the words I use!"

We Propajushis don't obey the set language rules. Instead, we write our own words. Anyone can register a new writing or speaking style in the Propjushi Dictionary***. From the moment we were registered, everyone talked like that, read and write poetry.

That's why I'm writing this invitation letter. On behalf of all the Propjushis, I'm proposing that you come here, make language and have fun together. You don't have to worry that the Propjushis won't like you. We welcome everyone, regardless of race, political affiliation, MBTI type, or pet. Rather, I tend to pursue such diversity. I hope to see you soon at the link below, shorten the letter.

<https://hub.xpub.nl/sandbot/~eunalee/flask/>

gun gun

In the country beyond the screen, your friend Eun-ah.

* Frabjous ("Fair, Fabulous, Joyous" by Lewis Carroll) compound word) and ish (a suffix meaning "of character")

** The first chapter of "The Collection of Urban Legends Vol. 1", a long-seller in the country beyond the screen, is available in other languages. it's about "Spelling", "Pidgin", "Red Underline", because "Right" or "Wrong" language does not exist in Propjush.

Words like "Gramery" make Propjushis terrified.

*** This book was bound by ring binding. Propjushis are in charge of adding pages non-stop
The printing house has banned wireless binding or ordering physical copies.

Image 7. Invitation letter to the Looking-Screen World written in Korean

Image 8. Letter in Korean published on the webpage

Image 9. Translated letter from Koren into English by Google Translate

To lessen the translation work, I let Google Translate cover it.

I acknowledge its rapid translation performance in 109 languages, but I would like to point out its three kinds of problems: the lack of context understanding, the ignorance of infrequently used expressions and the confusion in pronouns. My intended translation of the second line, "You must have" should be "You may have". The writer expresses how sure they are in English by auxiliary verbs, like "must" and "may". But in the Korean language, the auxiliary verb does not exist. Hints to understand the intensity of the writer's voice are hidden all over the words. Google's use of "must" verifies that the machine executes word-for-word translation rather than noticing the delicate nuance of the original text.

Secondly, as AI copies human linguistic habits, it also

copies our ignorance. For the ending of my letter, I used **충충**, equivalent to “best” or “warmly” in an informal English letters. It is an unfamiliar expression for many Korean netizens. Because, only intimate friends can exchange an informal letter in our culture and now, SMS steps into the breach. I suppose Google Translate does not have an opportunity to collect this language database. Nevertheless, the problem is that Google is trying to cover up its unawareness by bluffing. The translation of **충** is “gun”. Meanwhile, **충** of **충충** does not have any relation with a gun and even in English “gun gun” means nothing. This application should have admitted “I do not know.” Otherwise, the people who do not know that AI is flawed may continuously make a wrongly-translated Chinese restaurant menu-like text.

Lastly, “Until you discover” in the 8th line should be “Until I discover.” When the speaker and the subject in a sentence are equal, Korean does not precise “I”. And “Then he shouted” in the 12th line is not correct. It could be “he,” but also “she,” as my mother tongue has less tendency to use gender-pronoun. Fortunately, a Senior Software Engineer of Google AI, Melvin Johnson, criticized this gender bias in Google translate, especially from gender-neutral language into gender-specific language (Johnson, 2020). Since 2020, Google has been trying to reduce sexism in AI translation by showing both potential outputs, like in the following image. I hope this change applies to Korean translation very soon.



Image 10. How the Google Translate English into Spanish changed. (From left to right)

It seems like writing a letter in English by myself is more efficient than grumbling about Google’s free service. I open the “Notes” application of the Apple MacBook which supports Apple Auto-complete, text predictive function. After typing three to four letters, this function suggests a word. Then, I press the tap key to take it. In image 11, I accepted all its suggestions.

Thanks to Apple, I could save my typing and it made

me laugh about the poetic extension of my writing. Now the Frabjousish of the 11th line has a “twink” in their eyes, instead of “twinkle” and I, Euna, became “Fun”. Then, I was curious where those suggestions came from. According to Apple’s official website, this function is based on my past conversations, writing style and websites I visited in Safari. Not bloody likely! With this computer¹⁵ and this Apple account, I only used Chrome and this was the first time I wrote something with Apple Notes. The machine does not have enough of a database to predict my word. Whose English was I suggested? I’m trembling with fear by the fact that Apple is inventing my history that I have never engaged in.

¹⁵ I am writing on iMac at my school.

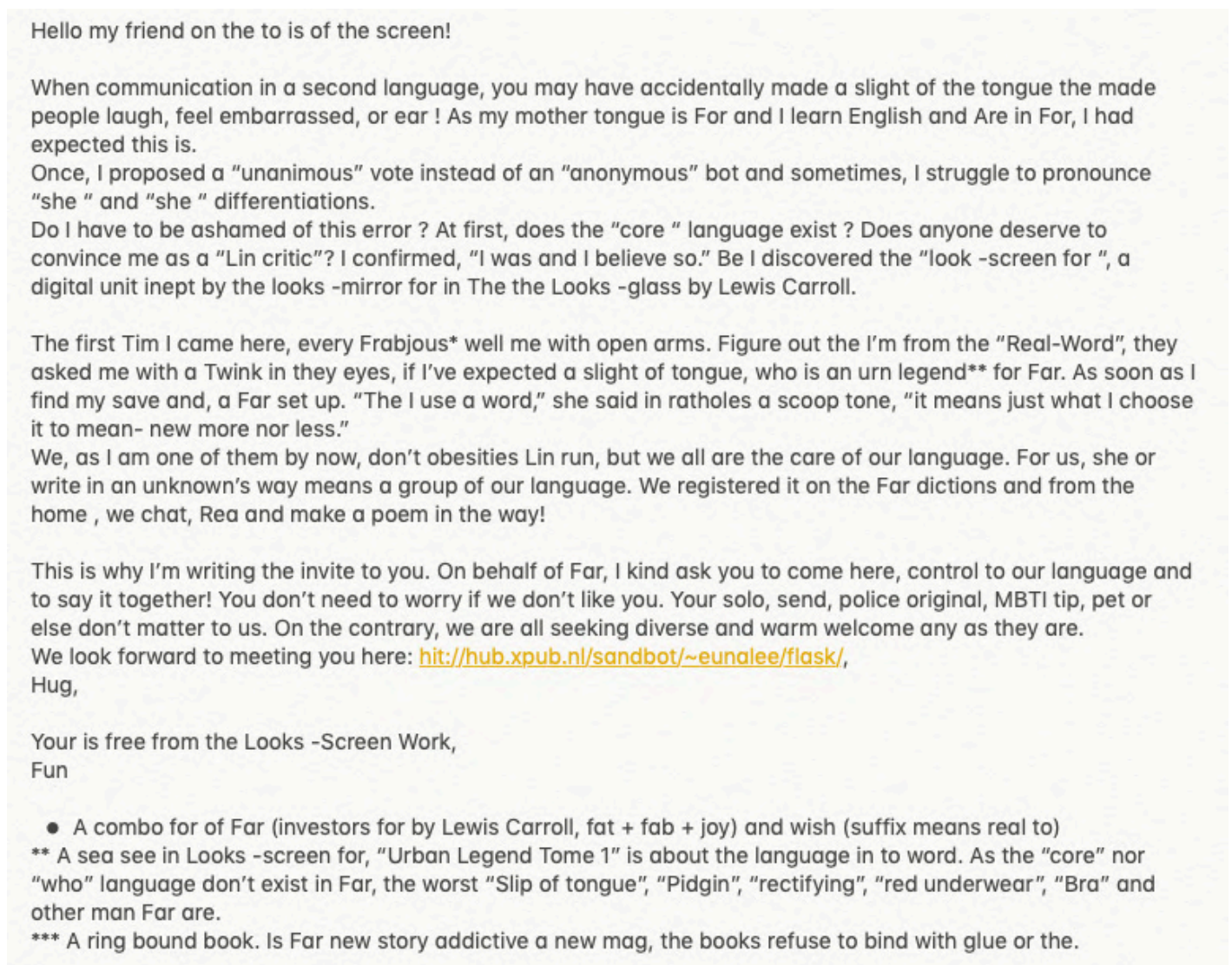


Image 11. Letter assisted by Apple Predictive Text, text-predictive function

There is no digital writing assistant to trust in this world!

I turn off the text-predictive function and write an invitation letter on my own, like in Image 12.

Hello my friend on the other side of the screen!

When communicating in a second language, you may have accidentally made a slip of the tongue that made people laugh, feel embarrassed, or enraged! As my mother tongue is Korean and I learned English and French in Korea, I have experienced those situations. Once, I proposed a "unanimous" vote instead of an "anonymous" vote and sometimes, I struggle to pronounce "sheet" and "shit" differently. Do I have to be ashamed of these errors? At first, does the "correct" language exist? Does anyone deserve to convict me as a "linguistic criminal"? I confess, "I was and I believed so" before I discovered the 'looking-screen world', a digital universe inspired by the looking-mirror world in *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll.

The first time I came here, every Frabjousish* welcomed me with open arms. Figuring out that I'm from the "Real-world", they asked me with a twinkle in their eyes, if I've experienced a slip of tongue, which is an urban legend** for Frabjousish. As soon as I finished my several anecdotes, a Frabjousish stepped up. "When I use a word," she said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean- neither more nor less."

We, as I am one of them by now, don't obey linguistic rules, but we all are the creator of our language. For us, speaking or writing in an unknown way is a moment of growth of Frabjousish. We register it on the Frabjousish Dictionary*** and from that moment, we chat, read and make a poem in that way!

This is why I'm writing this invitation to you. On behalf of Frabjousish, I kindly ask you to come here, contribute to our language and to savour it together! You don't need to worry if we don't like you. Your color, gender, political orientation, MBTI type, pet or else don't matter to us. On the contrary, we are always seeking diversity and warmly welcome anyone as they are. We look forward to meeting you here: <https://hub.xpub.nl/sandbot/~eunalee/flask/>,

Hug,

Your sincere friend from the Looking-Screen World,
Euna

* A compound word of Frabjous(invented word by Lewis Carroll, fair + fabulous +joyous) and ish(suffix meaning relating to)

** A steady seller in the Looking-screen world, "Urban legendarium Tome 1" is about the language in other worlds. As the "correct" nor "wrong" language does not exist in Frabjousish, the word "Slip of tongue", "pidgin", "rectify", "red underline", "Grammarly" and others make Frabjousish tremble.

*** A ring bound book. Since Frabjousish never stops adding a new page, the bookmaker refuses to bind with glue or thread.

Image 12. Invitation letter to the Looking-Screen World

I get my hope up to Grammarly's proofreading for the last time. Because English language professor Mayne stands by this digital assistant (Mayne, 2021) as we saw in the introduction, and Grammarly is in partnership with Samsung, a company that is South Korean, like I am. Honestly, the trial version was disappointing; It was only about needless use or removal of punctuation marks. But, the application says I can get 18 advanced suggestions with Grammarly Premium. So, I pay \$ 30 for a month. With charge service, I can set the style of my text, as in Image 13 below, and the application provides me with entire sentence suggestions instead of word for word.

On the right side of the screen on Image 14, we can find the overall score of my writing and four types of suggestions. Among them, I will concentrate on the Clarity and Engagement part. The third clarity solution is removing "rather" of the 18th line. The assistant warns me about an unnecessary and harmful word to make a concise text. It is because the machine can not

figure out that I quoted the entire phrase from the chapter Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-glass* (Carroll, 1871, p.83). By doing so, I expect the reader could easily imagine a connection between Lewis Carroll's book and my virtual universe. And it was a way to express my homage to the author. But for cold software, these are simply useless emotional decorations.

In the engagement part, which helps make my writing more interesting and effective, "a strange way" is proposed to replace "an unknown way" of the 21st line. According to the Cambridge English dictionary (Cambridge dictionary, no date), "unknown" means not known or familiar, while "strange" means unusual, unexpected or difficult to understand. I do not agree that those are synonyms, nor "strange" is more interesting than "unknown". If someone believes what they do not know is unusual or hard to understand, they have the exact opposite Frabjousish mindset. Frabjousish never generalizes others by their own standards. And Frabjousish chooses to be an explorer of freshness rather than to complain it is hard to understand.

For the last thing, I criticize the scoring system. Each time I consent to the suggestion, my overall score rises by 1 point. This meritocracy is at risk of blinding me and bending the will to express my word.

Set goals

Get tailored writing suggestions based on your goals and audience.

Domain Academic Business General **Email** Casual Creative

Email: Applies almost all rules, plus email writing conventions.

Intent Inform Describe **Convince** Tell A Story

Experimental. What are you trying to do? This helps us build new suggestions and won't affect your feedback today.

Audience **General** Knowledgeable Expert

General: Easy for anyone to read with minimal effort.

Formality Informal **Neutral** Formal

Neutral (default): Restricts slang but allows standard casual expressions.

Show Set Goals when I start a new document [Reset to defaults](#) [Done](#)

Image 13. Grammarly text style setting page

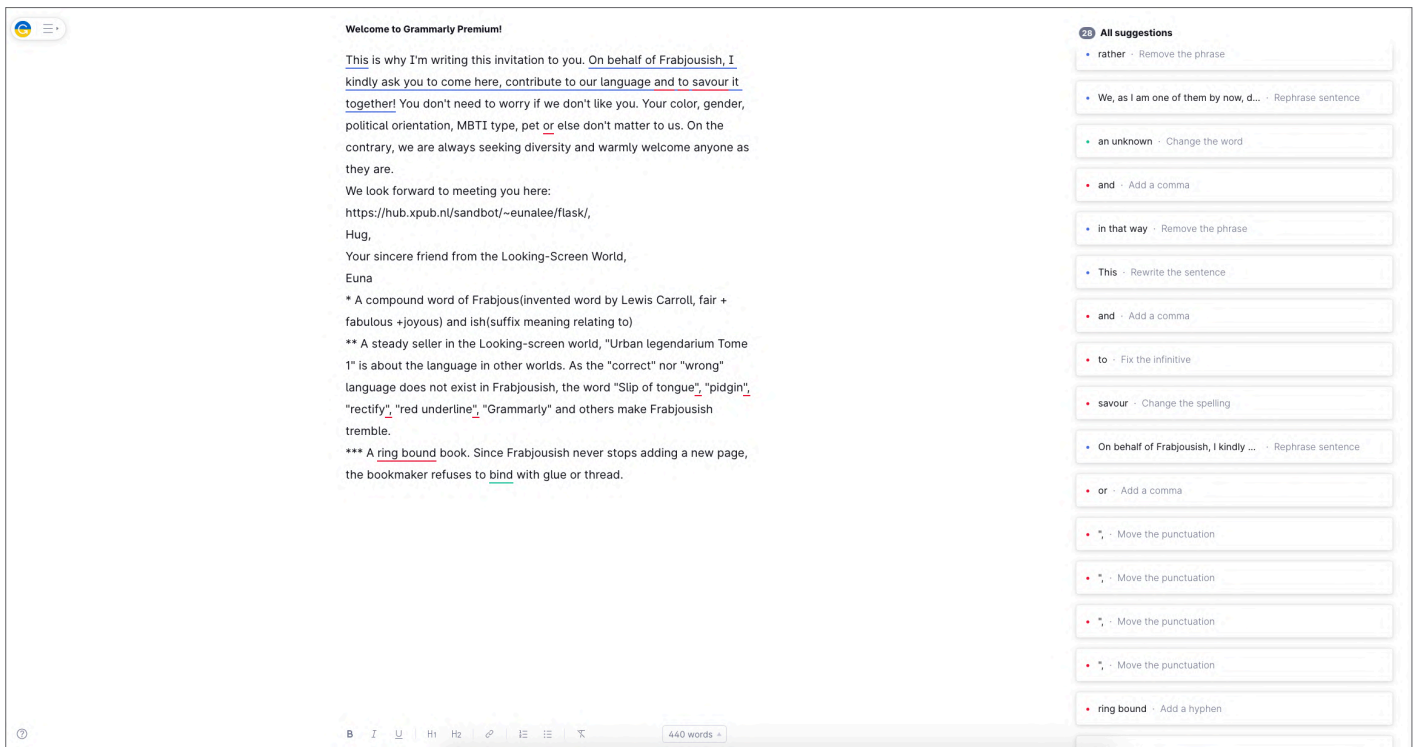
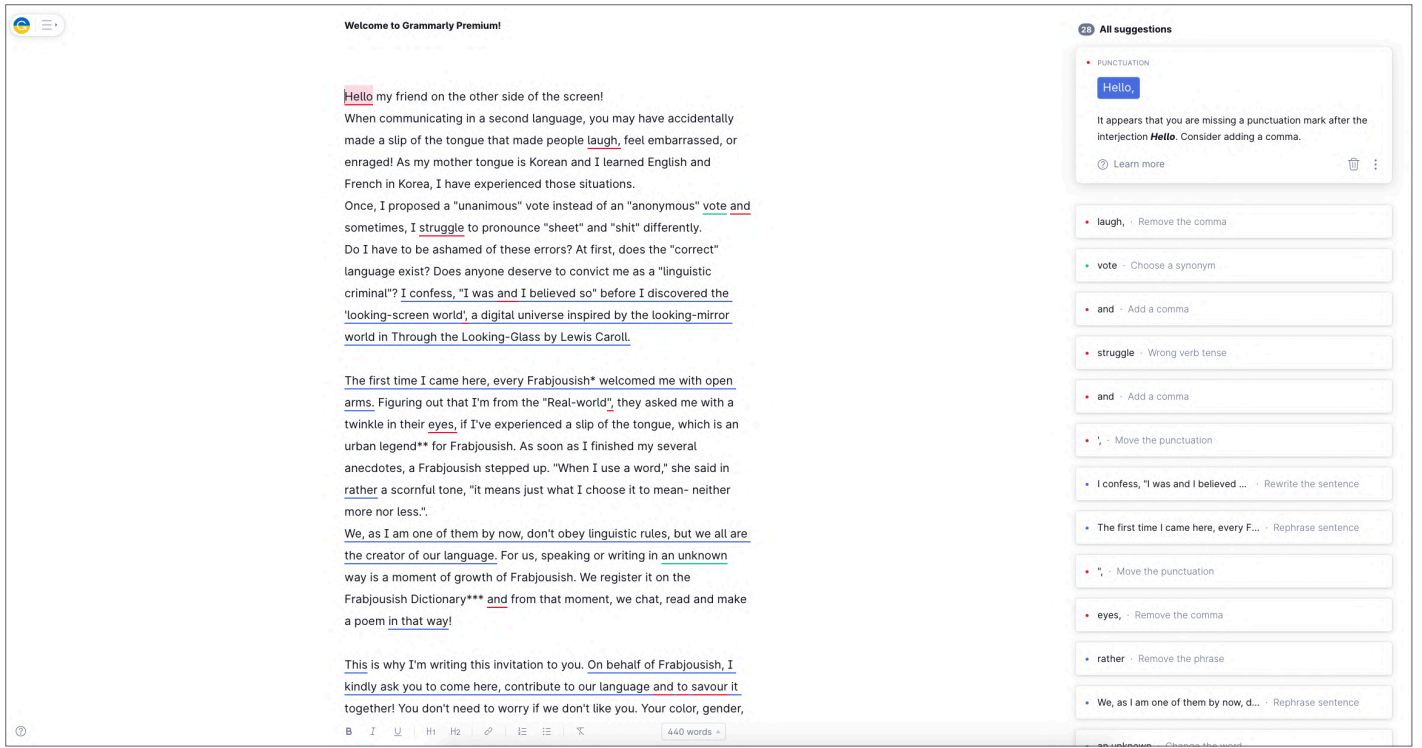


Image 14. Screen capture of Grammarly report 1

Image 15. Screen capture of Grammarly report 2

Chapter 3. Other strategies

¹⁶ Please do not say that you gave a name to your dog. I know that she ignored at the first time, but you obtained her permission by showing snacks.

In the previous chapter, I presented my graduation project as a way to protect my language. However, I am aware that it is an artistic gesture rather than a practical countermeasure. Reversing the creation of language, one person defines how to use one's word. This is possible since everything in *the Looking-Screen World* is upside down as the screen or mirror reflection. In reality, whether I agree or not, we have already decided how to call an object, an action or an idea, which makes people communicate easily. There is nothing I can name as I want¹⁶. Nevertheless, my project has value as an attempt to stand against the notion of the standard language. The participant can experience the humor and warmth of personal language and possibly have an affection for its creator, mainly the second language user.

3-1. Untranslatable Dictionary

¹⁷ 벼, 쌀 and 밥 in Korean respectively.

The most embarrassing situation in writing English is when an equivalent of a Korean word does not exist in English. In my country, depending on the condition, we call the rice differently; “unharvested rice”, “polished rice” and “cooked rice.”¹⁷

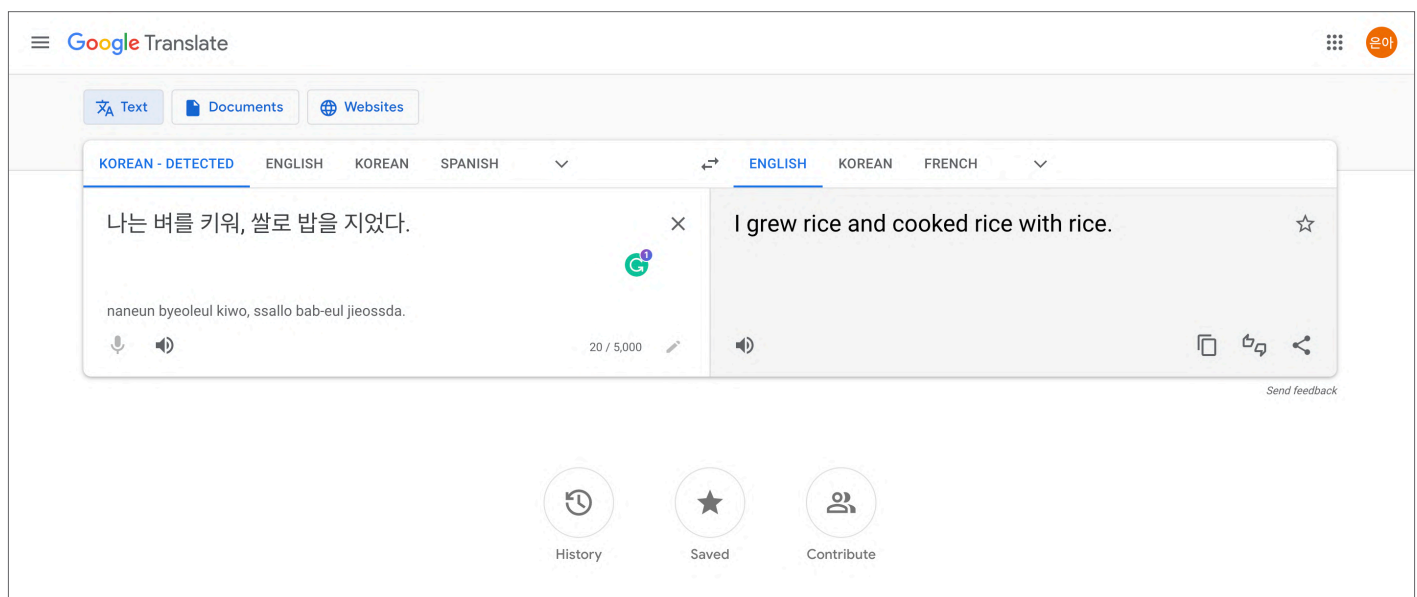


Image 16. Screen capture of Google Translate

This delicacy in rice represents rice-based Korean culture. (Han, 2019) But, the world has changed. There are many overseas residents who keep their native culture, but use non-native language for certain reasons; communication with neighbors, studying, profession, etc. Thus, the language does not necessarily reflect one specific language users' culture.

Sarah Vanhee, Elisa van Joolen, Yolanda De Los Bueis, and Christoph Schwarz mention this linguistic difficulty in their project *Untranslatable* (2011). It is a book that compiles words

that are impossible to translate precisely into other languages. And as its solution, they propose not to find an equivalence in English, but to use the original word as it is. For example, the Dutch word 'eigenwijs' signifies a negative character, opinionated, and optimistic, independent-minded at the same time. Instead of finding one specific word, the writers described its meaning and demonstrated 'how to use' with three examples (Vanhee et al., 2011, p.46). In the introduction of their book, they said that by using the word as it is, we absorb historical, semantic and emotional assets leading to true global unity (Vanhee et al., 2011, p.2).

However, as a printed book, this project has a limitation. It is not accessible to various people from different backgrounds and the content can not easily be added to. If the same project is found on the internet as a wiki-based website, many people from diverse cultures can participate in an untranslatable dictionary. As a result, we may make English represent all the cultural diversity.

3-2. Collaborative translation

Ivan Junqueira, a Brazilian translator and poet, said the strictly literal translation in poetry is almost impossible because of change of form, reduction of content and musicality. So, the translator has to make a careful word choice which is as hard as the recreation of a poem (2012, p.10).

For me, Junqueira is warning two things: Translators must pay attention to their decision-making in their choices of words and their readers should take the subjectivity of translated text into account. In this regard, Caroline Bergvall's translated text collection, *via 48 Dante variations*, presented in *Uncreative Writing* by Kenneth Goldsmiths, is come to my mind (quoted in Goldsmiths, 2011, p.192).

Bergvall, a sound artist and poet, collected 48 versions of translation, from Latin into English, of the first stanza of Dante's *Inferno*. During her voice performance, she read them aloud with her own voice. There are beautiful transformations of voice. One from Dante is extended to 48 voices of translators and lastly, gathered again into one artist's voice. As a non-Latin user, I do not know what hell did the original author have in mind, nor did each translator describe it correctly or not. But, looking through 48 different angles and hearing them in one voice, I feel that I can imagine hell more similarly to Dante's. On top of that, I suppose what could happen if 48 translators

collaborate to make one translated version. Not only giving an impression, or ‘virtuality’ of Flusser (2014, p.21), but they may elaborate an ultimate textual description of Inferno.

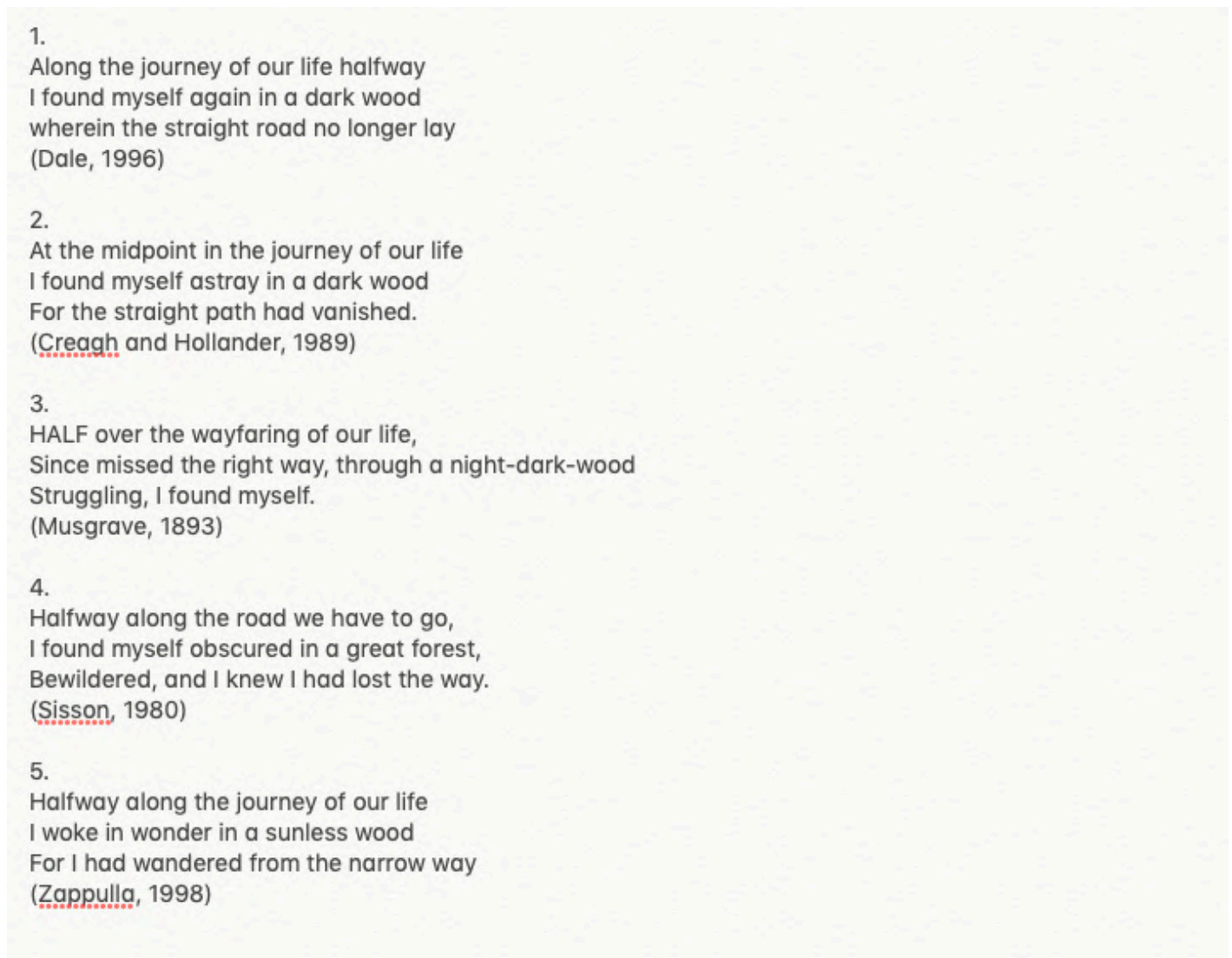


Image 17. Five first variations among 48 collections of Bergvall

Finally, I would like to present two projects around collaborative translation.

Guerrilla Translation is a Spanish translation agency in which a team of two professional translators collaborates on an activist text. They refuse the use of CAT tools, Computer-Assisted Translation, and the traditional top-down structure of translation companies. In the FAQ on their website, they criticize “the trend toward over-dependence on translation software is the result of the perceived need to get work done faster, not better.” (Guerrilla, no date) And they believe the translation of the devoted work by the original author deserves the same human devotion. For this reason, Guerrilla promise to their readers and partners¹⁸ a qualified output made by hand-craft cooperation. By the *Guerrilla Translation Handbook*, two translators share the Google Drive Document™ and exchange

¹⁸ They prefer the word “partnership,” rather than clients. (Radding, 2013) I guess it comes from their counter capitalistic direction. (Guerrilla manifesto, no date)

opinions using the Comment function. Also, this manual encourages workers to willingly help each other whenever their co-translator has difficulty and to solve the conflict through dialogue. (The Guerrilla Translation Handbook, 2019) This group has a beautiful humanistic working process, but some limitations exist. The entry barrier to participating in Guerrilla is high, only the professional translator after the nine months of the training. Inevitably, the service price is quoted more expensive than average¹⁹ and I may not expect that much background diversity of the translators.

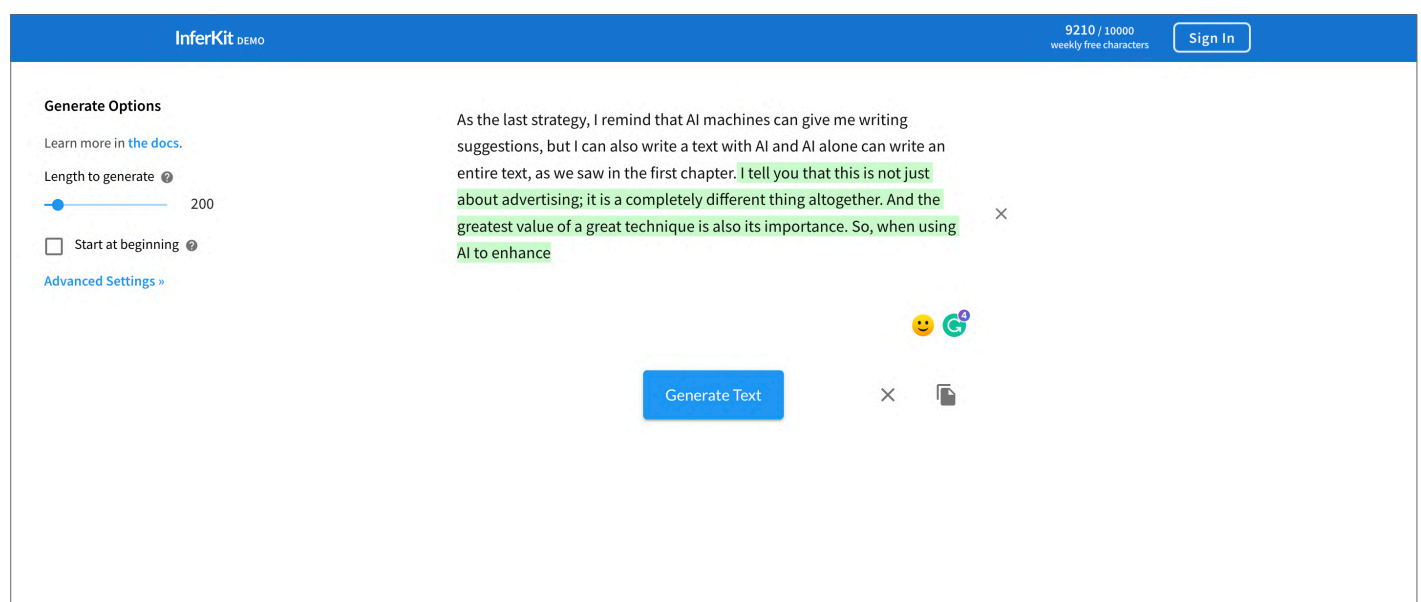
¹⁹ The average rate for English-Spanish translation is 0,099 euros per word, but Guerrilla is 0.12 euros. (Proz, 2022)

On the other hand, POEditor™ provides a workspace where a user can invite multiple translators to cooperate. The participants can discuss sentence by sentence and make a collective decision. As I can send an invitation to an unlimited number of people, I can finally benefit from collective intelligence. I would say that this digital service is ready to be a perfect tool for collaborative translation, except for one thing. In this whole structure, there is nowhere considering the payment of the price of labor. Then, I can not help relying on the generosity of my friend who wants to work pro bono for me. Even though I have lots of friends, the diversity of collaborators risks being limited to diversity, excluding professional translators.

3-3. Collaborative writing

As the last strategy, I remind that AI machines can give me writing suggestions, but I can also write a text with AI and AI alone can write an entire text, as we saw in the first chapter.

Image 18. AI-powered writer, InferKit, estimates the following sentences.



But again, I collaborated with a language model that biased

some privileged language users and AI wrote a new novel, like fan fiction written by GTP-2, on behalf of these people. What we can do is obvious; we write together. It is meaningful as a gesture, but also beneficial to writing itself. For example, this thesis is an outcome of collaboration between professors, classmates²⁰ and me. They handed me useful references, helped me choose an appropriate word for my abstract idea and finally, made me conscious of the idea that I had in mind but had not noticed yet. Through cooperation, the writer can broaden the universe in their text and figure out what they could not make alone.

²⁰ Especially Natasha, Marloes, Manetta and Camilo spared no effort for lost and rambling me.

Donna Haraway describes her collaborative writing with three other writers²¹ in *The Compost Story*, that they render each other capable (2016, p.136). During a writing workshop in 2013, they imagined a near future where the earth is so polluted, almost uninhabitable. The story revolves around a community named Compost and their struggles for survive. Each writer individually developed a Compost community story, exchanged their text and polished together to make one chronicle of five Compost generations.

²¹ They have various backgrounds; Donna Haraway, philosopher and writer; Fabrizio Terranova, filmmaker; Vinciane Despret, psychologist, philosopher and ethologist. (Haraway, 2016, p.134)

Their cooperative writing method resonates with the Compostists' solution; symbiosis (2016, p.140). Every newborn child of Compost has at least three parents and can add another at any time in life. Instead of making a newborn, which causes population growth and deepens pollution, adults concentrate on raising a valuable child by sharing the parenting responsibility and transmitting their knowledge. Even more, Compostists invite people from other communities, especially from the ruined province, to become a mentor to the young generation.

They also have non-human symbionts. These are the critters in crisis in distinction due to environmental change, but still, they have the wisdom of life and genetic benefit to survive. Through genetic modification, several children of Compost inherit both human and non-human genes and their advantages.

This community stops treating the problem superficially, saying, "I understand you." Instead, they embrace others as a part of their body. That means they absorb their advantage and worries at the same time. Although this fact leads to lots of conflicts²² and death, the Compostist's strategy is worth enough as long as it makes change to the earth and the humanity.

²² Conflicts between human and human-critter-mixed Compostists, between tribes, etc.

Conclusion

Haraway's fiction summarizes every strategy I have proposed so far. Rather than striking the standard language purism, we should acknowledge the value of others' languages and accept them as a part of our language. In addition, both the Compost community and I brought human-paced collaboration as a solution.

Nevertheless, I concede that in reality, cooperation activities are not sustainable solutions against AI-powered technology. Even though people realize how the digitalwriting assistant tool menaces our language, we may not easily abandon the digital convenience. Firstly, we are already addicted to their free instant conveniences. Moreover, time-saving is directly related to surviving in this capitalistic society²³.

²³ If I translate this thesis into Spanish, I will gladly invest the time and money in Guerrilla Translation. However, if I need to reply rapidly to a recruiter's job offer email, otherwise I fail to pay my rent, I can not help depending on those AI-powered writing assistants.

Hence, I do not want to insist on the total rejection of technology and it is not the purpose of this thesis. Thanks to the Art and Craft movement, the human crafters could take back their jobs and we inherited lots of masterpieces. But, always time and effort are expensive. Since the price of the productions soared, they were only accessible to several privileged bourgeoisie and blue blood.

I rather look forward to the appearance of the digital writing assistant which equally treats every language and equally offers a service to anyone. And I believe that it starts from us. For the first step, let's decolonise the language. Speak as you believe and stop correcting others' words.

Secondly, we would make a virtual space where people can express themselves and respect each others' voices. This space will be an alternative version of Reddit and could serve as a source of bias-free data points. The Last important thing is that we start action "Now." Because, luckily I still remember my regional accent and the meaning of "총총", but no one knows what will happen tomorrow. Every minute, we are losing a personal language speaker. As the Compost Community started off "when it was nonetheless still possible for concerted action to make a difference." (Haraway, 2016, p.145), we should do so too.

Then naturally, an AI Language Model of our bias-free language will be invented and I may feel comfortable when I write in digital space.

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Image 6:

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Image 10:

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Colophon

This work has been produced in the context of the graduation research of Euna Lee from the Experimental Publishing (XPUB) Master course at the Piet Zwart Institute, Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam.

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