

Loanword accentuation in Yanbian Korean: a weighted-constraints analysis

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Abstract This paper analyzes the factors that determine the assignment of accent to Western (primarily English) and Japanese loanwords in the Yanbian dialect of Korean. The study is based on a corpus of 1,737 words. The major findings are as follows. In Yanbian loanwords, the accent is basically located in a two-syllable window at the right edge of the word. The accent pattern differs between disyllabic and longer words. The penultimate syllable receives the strong default accent in disyllabic loanwords, and syllable weight affects the distribution gradiently. On the other hand, the default accent in Yanbian native words is final. Statistical analysis shows that the different accent distributions between the native words and loanwords are attributed to the lexical class difference. The discrepancy between native words and loanwords is supported by a wug test. Our hypothesis is that Yanbian loanword accentuation results from the grammar of the source language and lexical statistics, along with some adjustments by Yanbian native grammar. By comparing the three different loanword categories in Yanbian that derive from different source languages with different prosodic types (English—stress, Japanese—pitch accent, Mandarin—tone), we show statistically that each has its own accentual adaptation system. We propose a loanword adaptation model in which the loanword adaptation is understood as an induction process from a faithfulness constraint to the source language into relevant markedness constraints. Through a learning process, the original faithfulness constraints to the source language are demoted below relevant markedness constraints. These markedness constraints are weighted by the learning algorithm so that the weight hierarchy can achieve a more or less “faithful adaptation” of the source language. Under this view, each separate sublexicon can have a different weight hierarchy of markedness constraints.

Keywords Loanword phonology · Korean · Accentuation · Weighted constraints

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