

Korean speakers' perception of Japanese geminates: Evidence for the role of L1 grammar in loanword adaptation

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The present study aims to investigate whether the grammar of a recipient language (L1) plays a role in borrowing words of a donor language (L2), by exploring Korean speakers' perception of Japanese geminates as well as a recent survey of the Korean adaptation of Japanese geminates. In our perception experiment, eighty Seoul subjects (40 male and 40 female) were asked to listen to the voiceless geminates [pp, tt, kk, ss] in Japanese words which are grouped as frequently used and not frequently used in Korea.

The results of the present experiment showed that the Japanese geminates were perceived as either the sequence of a coda and an onset or an onset with no coda; that the first part of the Japanese geminates was perceived as either the coda fricative /s/ or no coda with our subjects' responses as the coda /s/ being significantly higher in frequently-used Japanese words than in not frequently-used ones; and that the second part of the geminates was mostly perceived as a fortis consonant, no matter whether Japanese words are frequently-used or not.

Based on the results as well as our survey of Korean adaptation of Japanese geminates, we suggest that the long oral closure/constriction duration and locus of each Japanese voiceless geminate are parsed as the sequence of the unmarked coronal plosive /t/ in coda position and a lenis consonant in onset position in accordance with Korean (L1) syllable structure constraints; that the unmarked coronal plosive is stored as the lenis fricative /s/ in L1 Lexicon due to Korean lexical restrictions; and that it is in L1 phonology that the lenis fricative is neutralized into the coronal plosive /t/, often deleted due to its unmarkedness in L1 output, and a following lenis consonant changes into fortis by virtue of Coda Neutralization and Post-Obstruent Tensification, respectively.

It is concluded that the present study provides empirical evidence for L1 grammar in loanword adaptation with the three intermediate steps of L1 perception, lexicon and phonology between L2 acoustic input (=L1 input) and L1 output, supporting the view that L2 phonetic inputs are parsed in terms of an L1 grammar.