
Phonological coercion in Pawnee

Donnerstag
09.03.2017
13:45 - 14:15
B4 1, 0.06

Masanori Deguchi
Western Washington University
deguchm@wwu.edu

This study examines certain phonological coercion processes in Pawnee, a North Caddoan language (Parks 1976). As shown in the contrast between (1) and (2), the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ is coerced as an affricate [c] when followed by a homorganic consonant.

- (1) a. /t/+/t/ → [ct]: /ta-t+tau:t-∅/ → [tactaʔu] 'I stole it.'
 b. /t/+/s/ → [ct]: /ta-t+sa-∅/ → [tacta] 'I'm lying.'
 c. /t/+/c/ → [ct]: /ta-t+cak-∅/ → [tactat] 'I shot it.'
- (2) a. /t/+/p/ → [tp]: /ta-t+paks/ → [ta-tpaks] 'I hit the boy...'
 b. /t/+/k/ → [tk]: /ta-t+kawi/ → [tatkwai] 'I'm grinding it.'

I demonstrate that /t/ undergoes coercion in order to improve the transition between syllables. Specifically, I argue that /t/ in the coda is coerced as [c], rendering it more sonorous than the onset of the following syllable. Based on this observation, I propose a syllable contact constraint (Vennemann 1988) defined in terms of sonority (Davis & Shin 1990). Since this constraint makes reference to the relative sonority between segments, it accounts for not only the coercion of /t/ into [c] (in the coda) but also the coercion of /c/ into [t] (in the onset) as in (1c). I further propose that this constraint be conjoined with a constraint that militates against homorganic clusters (Smolensky 1995). As support, I discuss predictions for the coercion patterns in geminates.

In summary, the phonological coercion discussed above is triggered for syllable contact, but it does not target a specific segment or a specific syllable position; while coda segments are usually coerced, onset segments are also coerced occasionally.

References: • Davis, S. & S.-H. Shin (1990): The Syllable Contact Constraint in Korean. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 8, 285-312. • Parks, D. (1976): *A Grammar of Pawnee*. Garland Publishing. • Smolensky, P. (1995): *On the Structure of the Constraint Component Con of UG*. Handout, UCLA. • Vennemann, T. (1988): *Preference Law for Syllable Structure*. Mouton de Gruyter.