

## Perceptual Similarity in English-to-Korean Loanwords

This study examines the role of perceptual similarity in loanword adaptation, focusing on vowel epenthesis in English-to-Korean loanwords. I argue that the motivation for vowel epenthesis in English-to-Korean loanwords is to increase the perceptual similarity between source forms and adapted forms, in addition to meeting constraints on syllable structure.

Vowel epenthesis in loanword adaptation has typically been motivated to satisfy syllable structure constraints of the borrowing language (Jacobs & Gussenhoven 2000; LaCharité & Paradis 2005, among others). But in Korean, simple syllable structure requirements are insufficient to motivate vowel epenthesis. Native Korean words satisfy syllable requirements through other strategies such as cluster simplification and coda neutralization, while only loanwords exhibit vowel epenthesis. With other resolutions available, but unused, vowel epenthesis cannot be entirely motivated by constraints on syllabic structure. I claim that the motivation for vowel epenthesis in English-to-Korean loanwords is perceptual similarity between English source forms and Korean adapted forms. I argue that both the environment for epenthesis and the quality of the vowel are driven by this similarity.

In support of this argument, I provide experimental evidence of the critical role of perception in vowel epenthesis. I present the results of an ABX discrimination task which examined how different English coda consonants in an English CVC sequence are perceived by Korean speakers. The results showed that English CVC words that end with sonorants or unreleased voiceless obstruents are perceptually most similar to corresponding Korean CVC words, but English CVC words that end with fricatives, released obstruents, or voiced obstruents are perceptually most similar to corresponding Korean CVC[ɪ] words, which end with the epenthetic vowel. English CVC words were never judged as similar to corresponding Korean CV words, which lack the original coda.

It is crucial to note that the results are consistent with the observed patterns of vowel epenthesis after a simple coda in English-to-Korean loanwords: sonorant codas are never adapted with an epenthetic vowel; fricative codas are always adapted with an epenthetic vowel; voiced stop codas are mostly adapted with an epenthetic vowel; and finally, voiceless stop codas are adapted with or without an epenthetic vowel and the choice is in part related to the stop release. The current results directly mirror all the patterns. This implies that vowel epenthesis is closely related to borrower's judgments on perceptual similarity between source and adapted forms. In other words, vowel epenthesis applies, not merely because a certain coda is illegal in Korean, but because epenthesis ensures a higher degree of perceptual similarity between perceived English input and adapted Korean output. Thus, any analysis of Korean vowel epenthesis should consider this perceptual effect in order to fully account for the phenomenon.