Title: The effect of syllable structure constraints on the perception and production of Korean L2 learners of English

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Abstract:
This study investigated the perception and production of onset clusters (e.g., plight) as well as fricatives and affricates in coda position (e.g., sass, push, rich, dodge) by high- and mid-proficiency Korean L2 learners of English (n=19) in comparison to native speakers of English. The ultimate goal was to determine how Korean L2 learners of English perceive the distinction between pairs such as push vs. pushy and plight vs. polite. Recent research investigating the role syllable structure constraints play in the perception of Japanese and Korean speakers has demonstrated that these constraints can result in the perception of an illusory vowel. Therefore, it was predicted that Korean learners of English (especially those at lower proficiency levels) would have difficulties distinguishing pairs accurately which contained consonants not allowed in word-final position in Korean, but which are in English. In addition, participants completed a production task where they read the experimental items from the perception task. Production accuracies were compared to their perception scores. Results demonstrate that Korean L2 learners of English have difficulty not only in producing the pairs of English words (e.g. push, pushy), but also in perceiving them to levels similar to native speakers of English. Findings from this study contribute to our understanding of L2 perception as well as provide insights into how syllable structure constraints play a role in perception and its ultimate link to difficulties in production.