

English Vowel Duration Affected by Voicing Contrast: A Cross Linguistic Examination of L2 English Production and Perception by Asian Learners of English

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Abstract : In several languages, it is widely acknowledged that vowels are longer before voiced consonants than before voiceless ones such as English. However, in Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Korean, the distribution of voiced-voiceless stop contrasts and long-short vowel differences are vastly different from English. The purpose of this study is to determine whether these targeted learners' L2 English production and perception change in terms of vowel duration as a function of stop voicing. The production measurements in the database of Asian learners revealed a distinct effect than the one observed in native speakers. There was no evident vowel lengthening patterns. The results of the perceptual experiment with 24 participants indicated that individuals tended to prefer voiceless stops when preceding vowels were shortened, but there was no statistically significant difference between intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced-level learners. However, learners demonstrated distinct perceptual patterns for various vowels and stops. The findings have valuable implications for L2 English speech acquisition. Keywords: voiced/voiceless stops, preceding vowel duration, voiced/voiceless perception, L2 English, L1 Mandarin Chinese, L1 Vietnamese, L1 Japanese, L1 Korean

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