

Limits of Short-Term Perceptual Training for Enhancing Seoul-Korean Listeners' Use of English Lexical Stress in Spoken Word Recognition

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This study investigates whether short-term perceptual training can enhance Seoul-Korean listeners' use of English lexical stress in spoken word recognition. Unlike English, Seoul Korean does not have lexical stress (or lexical pitch accents/tones). Seoul-Korean speakers at a high-intermediate English proficiency completed a visual-world eye-tracking experiment adapted from Connell et al. (2018) (pre-/post-test). The experiment tested whether pitch in the target stimulus (accented vs. unaccented first syllable) and vowel quality in the lexical competitor (reduced vs. full first vowel) modulated fixations to the target word (e.g., *PARrot*; *ARson*) over the competitor word (e.g., *paRADE* or *PARish*; *arCHIVE* or *ARcade*). In the training (eight 30-min sessions over eight days), participants heard English lexical-stress minimal pairs uttered by four talkers (high variability) or one talker (low variability), categorized them as noun (first-syllable stress) or verb (second-syllable stress), and received accuracy feedback. The results showed that neither training increased target-over-competitor fixation proportions. Crucially, the same training had been found to improve Seoul-Korean listeners' recall of English words differing in lexical stress (Tremblay et al., 2022) and their weighting of acoustic cues to English lexical stress (Tremblay et al., 2023). These results suggest that short-term perceptual training has a limited effect on target-over-competitor word activation.