

A corpus-based study of positional variation of Seoul Korean vowels

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In this talk, I will report on a corpus-based study of positional variation in Korean vowels. While the effect of stress and vowel duration on vowel quality variation and its connection to the typology of stress-conditioned vowel reduction has been widely studied, the phonetic underpinnings of word-initial position effect in vowel patterns are relatively understudied. Based on the analysis of over 1 million tokens of vowels in the *Reading-Style Speech Corpus of Seoul Korean* (The National Institute of the Korean Language 2005, 120 speakers), the study examines the effect of word-position on vowel quality variation, controlling for the effect of vowel duration, prosodic structure, morphological category, and lexical stratum. The results indicate that unlike the duration-based vowel reduction—which has the effect of vowel raising—vowel reduction in non-initial position has the centralizing effect, involving raising of low vowels and lowering of high vowels. Also, unlike the duration-based reduction, the positional reduction interacts with the on-going sound change in back vowels.

The study reported in this talk is part of a larger project on corpus-based investigation of Korean, in collaboration with Tae-Jin Yoon and Sungwoo Han.