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The Onset Form Preparation Effect in Korean Single Word Production

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Abstract

Korean has a simple syllable structure like Mandarin Chinese, but it allows for resyllabification unlike Chinese. Its rhythm is often perceived as syllable-timed, although the frequent occurrence of taps and strong final lengthening also give it the stress-timed impression. It uses a script that consists of characters, but the characters are phonologically-based. These mixed characteristics make it difficult to predict whether the Korean word production system employs the phoneme or the syllable or even the mora as the proximate unit for phonological encoding. The present study adopted the form preparation task, in which the onset phoneme (n, g, ch, b) was the shared phonological content among the response words in the homogeneous context. The participants were 23 college students conveniently recruited from university campuses in Seoul. The observed onset preparation effect was close to zero. The result rules out the phoneme as the proximate unit in Korean word production.