“Lax” stops in Korean revisited: VOT neutralization

This study reinvestigated the VOT values of the three Korean stops according to phonation type by taking factors such as age, place of articulation, syllable type, and speech rate into consideration. Specifically, Silva’s findings and implications (2006) were retested. Data were obtained from nine Seoul female speakers varying 20’, 40’s, and 50’s in terms of age. The results showed that there was a remarkable overlap in VOT values between lax and aspirated stops, indicating that VOT differences between the two stops are being neutralized. Lax stops were heavily aspirated (i.e., increasing VOT) while aspirated stops were less aspirated (i.e., decreasing VOT). They seemed to be undergoing some sound change in terms of VOT duration. Since VOT is no longer a cue to distinguish lax from aspirated stops, tone remains to be a primary role to contrast the two stops in both production and perception. The present study proposes that, since the Korean data is very similar to other languages which have undergone tonogenesis, the present data proposed that it might be the case.

Figure 2 The Pooled Data: Overall mean VOT values (ms) and range (within 1 standard deviation) aggregated from nine female speakers according to aspirated, lax, and tense stop.
REFERENCES

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