

The epenthetic vowel in Persian loanwords borrowed from English

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(Talk/Poster presentation of an on-going project)

Issue: Vowel insertion into loanwords is a strategy to satisfy the target language's phonological constraints (Uffman 2006). Phonetically, it is agreed that the inserted vowel has different properties from native vowels in the target language including it being shorter or less salient (Steriaide 2001). As Persian blocks consonant clusters word-initially, a vowel is added to the beginning of loanwords with an initial consonant cluster as in (1).

(1) stadium → estâdiyom

The main aim of this study is to explore whether the epenthetic vowel /e/ in loanwords is different in length from that of the native vowel /e/ in Persian.

Materials & Procedure: Twenty Persian monolinguals are recruited to listen to and repeat a set of sentences produced by a robot-voice synthesizer. Each sentence includes either a loanword with an initial epenthetic vowel /e/ or an original Persian word with an initial short vowel /e/ as in (2).

(2) Babak likes (*estaxr* 'swimming pool'/*estâdiyom* 'stadium')

Predictions and Implications: If the phonetic properties of epenthetic vowels are different from that of the native vowels, the epenthetic vowel in Persian loanwords is expected to be significantly shorter than the native vowel in original Persian words.

The results of this study can shed light on the difference between phonetic properties of epenthetic vowels and original vowels in an understudied language. ¹

Keywords: Persian, loanwords, epenthetic vowel, vowel length

¹. Due to the pandemic, the in-person lab meetings were transferred to online Skype meetings. As the new ethics has been approved, the data will be collected and analyzed in a two-month period.

Selected References:

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