The perception of articulatory timing lag in onset clusters: Cross-linguistic differences

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Cross-language research on consonant cluster production has shown that consonant clusters in different languages are produced with different degrees of articulatory timing lag. For instance, German onset consonant clusters are produced with relatively shorter inter-consonant lag than Georgian ones. The present study examines perceptual sensitivity to these cross-linguistic timing differences. Native listeners of Georgian, German, French, and Japanese are tested on the perception of consonant clusters produced by German (short lag) and Georgian (long lag) speakers. Results show that all four groups of listeners are sensitive to the cross-linguistic differences in articulatory timing lag, suggesting that adult listeners are capable of discerning non-native sub-phonemic details regardless of their native phonotactics.