The talk will be mainly on the perceptual side of the Japanese vowel devoicing phenomenon. I will discuss how its phonetic and phonological aspects are reflected in perception. Also discussed alongside will be English vowel reduction, deletion and devoicing with respect to its similarity to ‘phonetic’ devoicing of Japanese.

High vowels between voiceless consonants are devoiced in Japanese (e.g. kita ‘north’). The phenomenon has been well documented with respect to its production, but there is no or very little study on its perceptual side. Typical devoicing is virtually mandatory and exceptionless even in slow, careful speech. Due to this predictability, upon hearing the devoiced ki-, the listener may anticipate a ‘voiceless’ consonant to follow. After introducing some experimental results on the expected perceptual effect, I will further discuss whether and how phonetic devoicing (speech-factor dependent) and phonological devoicing (feature-specification dependent) are reflected in their perception.