



Cantonese Tone Perception in Punjabi Speakers: Implications for the Perceptual Assimilation Model for Suprasegmentals

Date: 23 April 2024

Time: 10:30am - 12:00pm

Location: Rm3401 (Lift 2), Academic Building

Speaker: Prof. William Choi

Language: English

Professor William Choi is the Director of the Speech and Music Perception Laboratory at The University of Hong Kong. His research focuses on tone perception, stress perception, and the interconnectivity between music and speech. His notable works on cross-linguistic speech perception include the Acoustic-Attentional-Contextual Hypothesis (Choi, 2022) and the Dimensional Transfer Hypothesis (Choi & Tsui, 2023). In music-related research, Professor Choi is known for identifying the selectivity of musical advantage (Choi, 2020) and the role of musical instrument in music-to-language transfer (Choi et al., 2023, in press).



Abstract

Anika is a Punjabi speaker growing up in Hong Kong. Unlike many second language Cantonese learners, Anika uses tones in her first language. As such, teachers expect that she has no problem learning Cantonese tones. While Anika can indeed perceive some Cantonese tones accurately, she still struggles to distinguish between 衣 *clothes* /ji1/, 意 *meaning* /ji3/, 二 *two* /ji6/, and many other Cantonese tone contrasts.

Theoretically, the Perceptual Assimilation Model for Suprasegmentals (PAM-S) has already proposed that speaking a tone language does not necessarily benefit non-native tone perception. In essence, non-native listeners assimilate different non-native tone contrasts in their first language tonal system differently. This can either hinder, benefit, or have no effect on discrimination. While PAM-S has received some empirical support, previous research seldom differentiated between phonological and non-phonological discrimination.

In this seminar, I will present a study in which we tested PAM-S with Punjabi speakers in Hong Kong. Of interest is whether PAM-S consistently applies to the phonological and non-phonological modes of discrimination. In our study, the participants completed a Cantonese tone assimilation and discrimination task. Our results suggest that PAM-S fully predicted Cantonese tone discrimination only in the phonological mode.

國語