The first language acquisition of phonological categories: evidence from segmental development

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11:45 – 1 pm
Room 750-753, Meng Wah Complex, HKU
(Chair: Prof Tom Klee)

Abstract

The literature on the development of phonology in children offers different hypotheses concerning the 'size' of the phonological units acquired by children. Some scholars claim that the word is the basic unit, which encodes phonetic properties as part of word 'templates' (e.g. Vihman 2014). Other scholars claim that children develop representation all the way into subsegmental (or featural) categories (e.g. Levelt 1994; Rose 2014). During my presentation, I will present evidence in favour of the second position from the acquisition of consonants by learners of different languages (Dutch, English, French, Portuguese). I will discuss different patterns of phonological development and highlight how phonetic considerations come to form a basis for the emergence of phonological categories, building on a recent proposal by Rose, McAllister and Inkelas (2018). I will also discuss how additional factors such as usage frequency may at times influence the child's acquisition of these categories.

About the speaker

Professor Yvan Rose is a researcher in linguistics (phonetics and phonology) who specializes in language acquisition and speech disorders at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. He obtained his Ph.D. from McGill University in 2001 and pursued additional training as postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Berkeley as well as Brown University. His research focuses on the integration of perceptual, acoustic and articulatory factors within theoretical models of phonology and phonological development. He has also contributed to the expansion of research methods in these areas through the development of Phon, an open-source software program for the study of phonology and acoustic phonetics (https://www.phon.ca), and the creation of the PhonBank, a web-accessible database documenting language acquisition and speech disorders across a wide range of languages and language learning contexts (https://phonbank.talkbank.org).

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