



Short-term Phonetic Convergence of Hong Kong English Towards RP and General American English and the Effect of Language Attitudes

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Date: January 19, 2021 (Tuesday)
Time: 4:30pm - 6:15pm (Hong Kong Time, UTC +8)
***Seminar will be conducted via ZOOM**



Registration Deadline:
12:00nn of 17 January 2021 (Sunday) – Hong Kong Time
The Zoom Meeting details will be provided on 18 January 2021



Prior registration is required

Abstract

Phonetic convergence or phonetic accommodation refers to the process where people change the way they speak towards their interlocutors in conversations. Previous studies found evidence of phonetic convergence between native English speakers of different dialects, such as American English, New Zealand English and Standard Southern British English. In these studies, social factors such as language attitudes, sex, the role in a conversation affect how people accommodate. While most of the literature focus on convergence of native English speakers, phonetic accommodation of non-native speakers is largely under-investigated. It is also unclear whether language attitudes affect non-native speakers' accommodation. This presentation will present two studies addressing to this research niche. Study 1 looked at phonetic convergence of THOUGHT, BATH vowels, th-fronting, [z] and rhoticity between Hong Kong English (HKE) speakers and speakers of Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American English (GenAmE) in a conversational setting. 19 Hong Kong participants completed a Map task with an RP speaker and a GenAmE speaker in two separate experiments. A pre-task and a post-task were conducted to measure HKE speakers' degree of convergence. Results suggest that HKE speakers did not converge on all the five variables but selectively converged on sounds that are more salient to them, such as the [z] and rhoticity. Study 2 investigated these 19 HKE speakers' attitudes towards British English and American English using the matched-guise method. Results show that language attitudes did not affect HKE speakers' accommodation. In other words, the HKE speakers who prefer British English did not accommodate more towards the RP speakers in Study 1. These findings do not only contribute to current research of speech convergence, but also have important implications to language teaching, speech communication and human-machine interactions.

Speaker

Dr Grace Wenling Cao received her PhD in sociophonetics from the University of York and her master's degree in developmental linguistics from the University of Edinburgh. Before she joined the Chinese University of Hong Kong, she taught phonetics and phonology as a lecturer at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Dr Cao's expertise is in sociophonetics, language attitudes, Hong Kong English and identity. Her work on phonetic convergence was awarded the Best paper in the 50th annual meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea (SLE) at the University of Zurich. Her recent work investigated the role of cultural identity in Hong Kong people's attitudes towards Hong Kong English, China English, Mandarin and Cantonese. She is also interested in the implications of sociophonetics in human-machine interactions and robotic design.

All are Welcome

