

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Program Rundown

17 Jan, 2025 Morning | Venue: Cho Yiu Conference Hall

9:00am – 9:20am Opening and Photo-Taking

9:20am – 10:00am



Brian MacWhinney
Carnegie Mellon University
Title: New Technologies For Studying Language Learning

10:00am – 10:30am Coffee Break

10:30am – 11:00am



Fang Liu
University of Reading
Title: Using Music To Facilitate Language Acquisition In Autism

11:00am – 11:30am



Angel Chan
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Title: Supporting Bilingual Children With Developmental Language Disorder: Identification And Intervention

11:30am – 12:00pm



Ziyin Mai
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Title: Input And Experience In Early Trilingual Development

12:00pm – 2:00pm Lunch

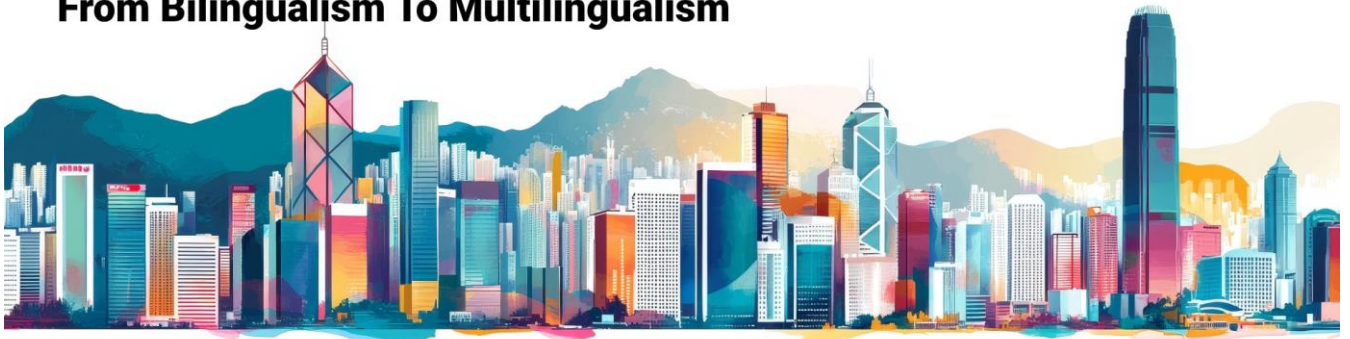
Location - Cho Yiu Conference Hall, University Administration Building



Get off at the University Station and take a shuttle bus (CUHK school bus) No. 1A / 1B / 2 at the University bus station near the University MTR Station (Exit A or C).

Alight at Sir Run Run Shaw Hall or at University Administration Building and proceed to the University Mall. Cho Yiu Hall is in the University Administration Building.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Program Rundown

17 Jan, 2025 Afternoon | Venue: Lee Shau Kee Lecture Theatre 2

2:00pm – 2:30pm



Lucy Zhao
University of Cambridge

Title: Anaphora Resolution In L1 And L2 Acquisition Of Mandarin Chinese

2:30pm – 3:00pm



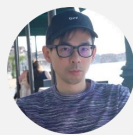
Xiangjun Deng
Shenzhen University

Title: Input Frequency Effects In The L1 Acquisition Of English Quantifiers: A Corpus-Based Study

3:00pm – 3:30pm

Coffee Break

3:30pm – 3:50pm



Pui Yiu Szeto
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Title: Optional Past Tense Marking In Chinese-English Heritage Bilingual Children

Student Presentations

3:50pm – 5:15pm

Yuqing Liang
Jingyao Liu
Melody Mengyao Shang
Xuening Zhang

Hecheng Zhang
Carleon Mendoza
Chris Law
Danielle Hiu Fung Lung
Yuqi Wu

Location - Lee Shau Kee Building, Lecture Theatre 2



School Bus Route No. 1A, 1B or 2: The bus stations are located outside the University MTR station exit A and C. Get off the school bus at Sir Run Run Shaw Hall and walk for about 3 minutes to Lee Shau Kee Building.

School Bus Route No. 3: The bus station is located opposite to the University MTR station exit D. Get off the school bus at Fung King Hey Building and walk for about 1 minute to Lee Shau Kee Building.

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Program Rundown

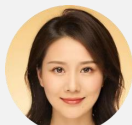
18 Jan, 2025 Morning | Venue: Lee Shau Kee Lecture Theatre 2

9:30am – 10:00am



Evan Kidd
Australian National University
Title: Linguistic Diversity In Language Acquisition Research

10:00am – 10:20am



Yao Lu
Peking University
Title: An Investigation Of Mandarin Tone Perception Among Korean-Chinese Bilinguals In Yanbian District: A Comparative Study Based On Different Age Groups

10:20am – 10:40am



Shanshan Yan
Peking University
Title: Sentence-final Particles In Bilingual Adult And Child Mandarin Chinese

10:40am – 11:00am

Coffee Break

11:00am – 11:20am



Wenchun Yang
Xi'an Jiaotong University
Title: Expressive Narrative Competence In Left-behind Ethnic Minority Children In China: Evidence From Yi And Kam Children

Location - Lee Shau Kee Building, Lecture Theatre 2



School Bus Route No. 1A, 1B or 2: The bus stations are located outside the University MTR station exit A and C. Get off the school bus at Sir Run Run Shaw Hall and walk for about 3 minutes to Lee Shau Kee Building. School Bus Route

No. 3: The bus station is located opposite to the University MTR station exit D. Get off the school bus at Fung King Hey Building and walk for about 1 minute to Lee Shau Kee Building.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Program Rundown

18 Jan, 2025 Morning | Venue: Lee Shau Kee Lecture Theatre 2

11:20am – 11:40am



Haoyan Ge
Hong Kong Metropolitan University

Title: Bilingualism Effects On Autistic Children: Evidence From The Production Of Focus

11:40am – 12:00pm



Jiangling Zhou
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Title: Bridging Languages, Building Stories: Cross- And Within-Language Associations In Narrative Production And Comprehension Among Cantonese-English Bilingual Children

12:00pm – 12:30pm



Virginia Yip
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Title: Reflections On Language Acquisition Research: From Bilingualism To Multilingualism

12:30pm – 2:30pm

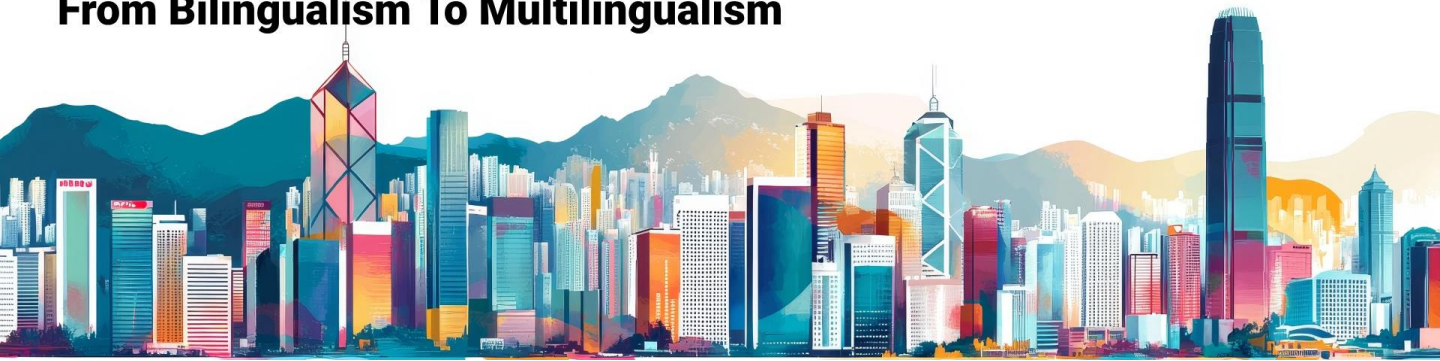
Lunch

2:30pm – 4:30pm

Business Meeting (By Invitation Only)

~ End Of The Symposium ~

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



New Technologies for Studying Language Learning

Keynote Speaker: Brian MacWhinney
Carnegie Mellon University

Biosketch:

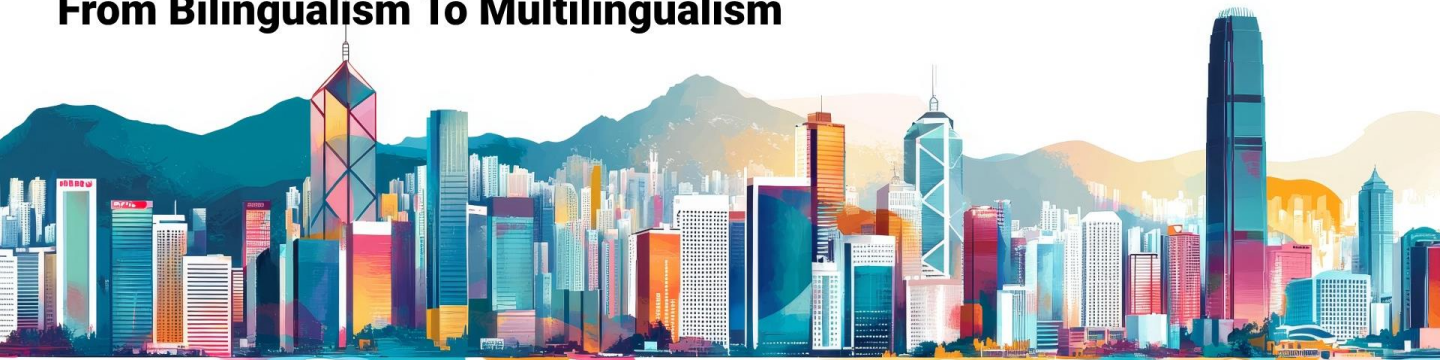
I am a Teresa Heina Professor of Cognitive Psychology whose research spans language acquisition and psycholinguistics. I continue to be a leader in SLA. My most well-known contributions to the field include my work on emergentist theory and the Competition Model of language processing (MacWhinney, 2015). I also manage the NIH and NSF-funded CHILDES and TalkBank (including SLABank) corpora. My mentorship with SLA students is also well documented. My recent work with SLA students includes studies with online tutors for the learning of English article usage, studies of beginners' learning of French noun gender, L2 learning of definite article selection in Wikipedia articles in German, online L2 learning through captioned video, language learning in VR, eye-movement monitoring of predictive processing in L2 Japanese, literacy training in Latin, learning of compounds and verb expansion in Mandarin, online methods for learning Pinyin and Chinese tones, computational tools for corpus analysis, and the development of an online database with commentary for analyzing interactions in the L2 classroom.

Abstract:

Recent advances in Machine Learning (ML), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Natural Language Processing (NLP), and web technologies provide tools that can automate and improve studies of L1 and L2 spoken language learning. We have been applying these new developments to improve the scope and power of the 14 databases in TalkBank, including databases such as CHILDES, AphasiaBank, DementiaBank, and SLABank. This presentation will explain the processes and results of six of these developments:

1. We have configured advances in automatic speech recognition (ASR) to speed and improve transcription of language samples. We use our Batchalign Python script to go quickly from raw audio to a first-draft CHAT transcript for inclusion in CHILDES, SLABank, or other TalkBank databases.

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New Technologies for Studying Language Learning

Keynote Speaker: Brian MacWhinney
Carnegie Mellon University

Abstract (Continued):

2. We have used Batchalign2 to apply Universal Dependency grammars to tag new and older transcripts in 28 languages for part-of-speech, morphological features, and grammatical dependency relations. These new resources open possibilities for deeper crosslinguistic study of language learning.

3. We have used a new Batchalign method for forced alignment of media to transcript to align hundreds of hours of transcripts in TalkBank to the related media on the utterances and word level for playback and analysis of fluency and interactional patterns.

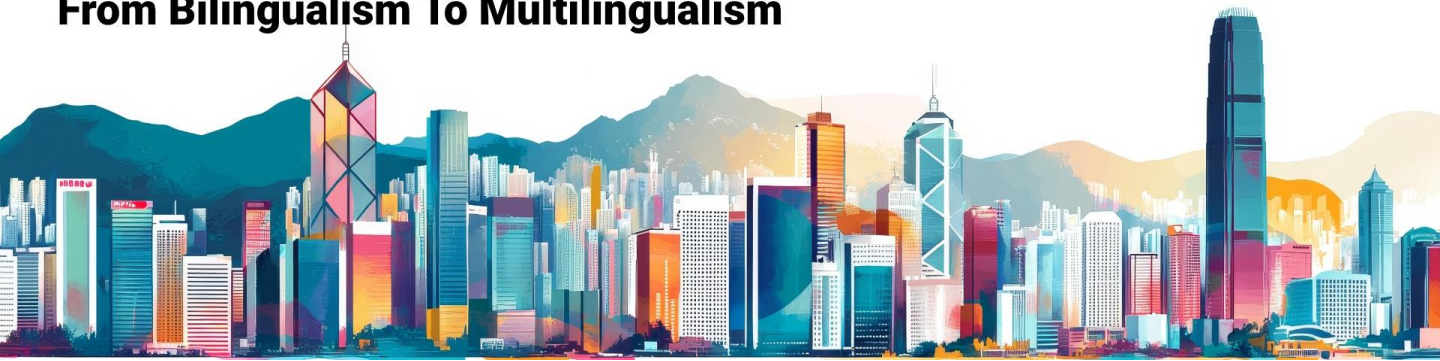
4. The TalkBankDB system allows for systematic database queries across all materials in TalkBank

5. The Collaborative Commentary system allows for greater in-depth study and reliability checking for codes and comments on conversational patterns, error types, gestures, and learning patterns.

6. The new Phon4 program supports automatic detailed cross-tier analyses for lexical, morphological, syntactic, phonological, and fluency structures.

Next, we will consider the relation between learning methods for AI large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT and human language learning. Although LLMs and humans learn in markedly different ways, the resultant abilities are similar in some regards. We will consider ways in which modifications of LLMs could improve their use as models of human language learning.

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Linguistic Diversity In Language Acquisition Research

Keynote Speaker: Evan Kidd
Australian National University

Biosketch:

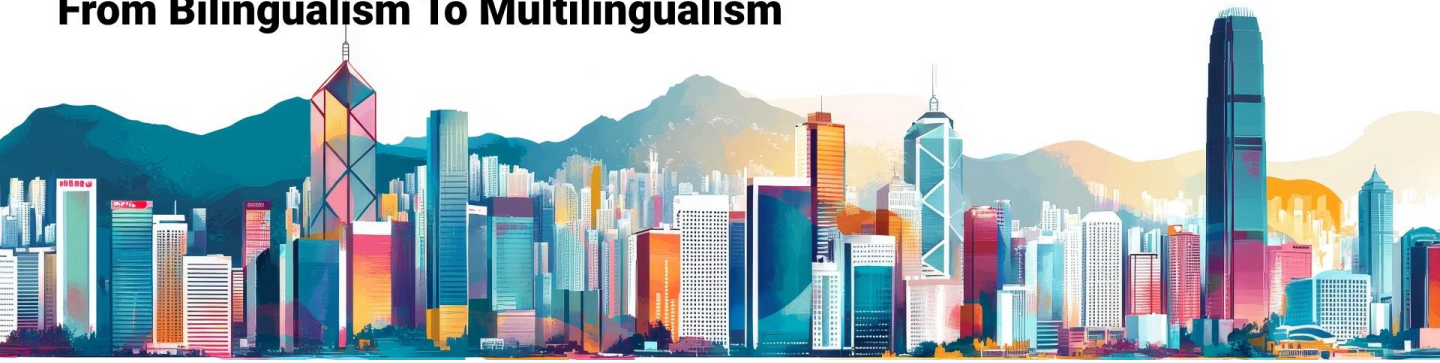
I was awarded my BBS(Hons) in 1999 and my PhD (Psycholinguistics) in 2004, both from La Trobe University. Over my career I have worked at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, The University of Manchester, and La Trobe University. I began working at the Australian National University in 2012, originally working in the Research School of Psychology. In 2022 I moved over to School of Literature, Languages, and Linguistics to take up a position as Professor of Linguistics.

My research is in psycholinguistics. I work both on language acquisition (including first language acquisition, bilingualism, & second language acquisition) and adult language processing. My recent research has focused on individual differences in language acquisition and use, the relationship between language acquisition and on-line sentence processing in crosslinguistic perspective, and the influence of typological diversity on sentence planning and production. Accordingly, my research group works on several typologically diverse languages. I also have a keen interest in how language interfaces with other social and cognitive processes.

Abstract:

A comprehensive theory of the human capacity for language must be flexible enough to capture the fact that human children can acquire any one of the world's 7000+ diverse languages, and more often than not acquire more than one language at a time. However, what we know about how children acquire language is heavily skewed towards English and a handful of other (mostly related) languages (Kidd & Garcia, 2022), studied primarily in monolingual contexts. In this talk I discuss the current state of language coverage in the field of child language acquisition and juxtapose it against a parallel and concerning trend: the rapid rate at which languages are becoming endangered and lost. I then argue that concentrating on studying the acquisition of threatened languages can have the dual effect of widening the number of languages for which we have acquisition data, thus leading to more robust theoretical development, and can also help stem the flow of language loss by investing in the transmission of language to future generations.

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Using Music To Facilitate Language Acquisition In Autism

Keynote Speaker: Fang Liu
University of Reading

Biosketch:

Dr Fang Liu is an Associate Professor in the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences at the University of Reading. She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics and an M.S. in Statistics from the University of Chicago. Before joining the University of Reading, she served as a lecturer in the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Essex and completed postdoctoral research at University College London, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Stanford University, and Goldsmiths, University of London.

Dr Liu's research focuses on how the human brain processes pitch information for both linguistic and musical purposes during production and perception. Using behavioural and EEG methods, she has published over 60 journal articles. Her comparative studies include neurodevelopmental conditions such as amusia, autism, and dyslexia, as well as research on tone language speakers and musicians.

Her work has been supported by the European Research Council (grants: 678733, CAASD, 2016-2023; 838787, MAP, 2019-2022) and the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK (grant: PTA-026-27-2480, 2009-2010).

Abstract:

f.liu@reading.ac.uk; <https://research.reading.ac.uk/caasd-project/> @CAASDproject

Globally, around 1% of the population is autistic, with approximately 30% of autistic individuals being nonspeaking, despite various interventions¹⁻⁴. Challenges with spoken language impact communication, social interaction, academic performance, and overall quality of life⁵⁻⁸. These difficulties often lead to greater reliance on health and other services⁹⁻¹². Improving spoken language outcomes for autistic individuals can enhance their quality of life and reduce these global support costs¹³.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Using Music To Facilitate Language Acquisition In Autism

Keynote Speaker: Fang Liu
University of Reading

Abstract (Continued):

Research has shown that music-making and music training can improve auditory processing, sensorimotor integration, motor and imitative skills, cognitive function, social interaction, communication, and most notably, language processing¹⁴. In this talk, I will share findings from our proof-of-concept project, MAP (music-assisted programmes), funded by the European Research Council (ERC). This project explored how music can support language learning in autistic children.

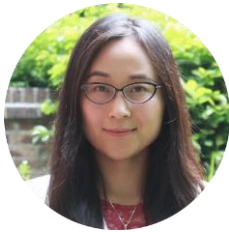
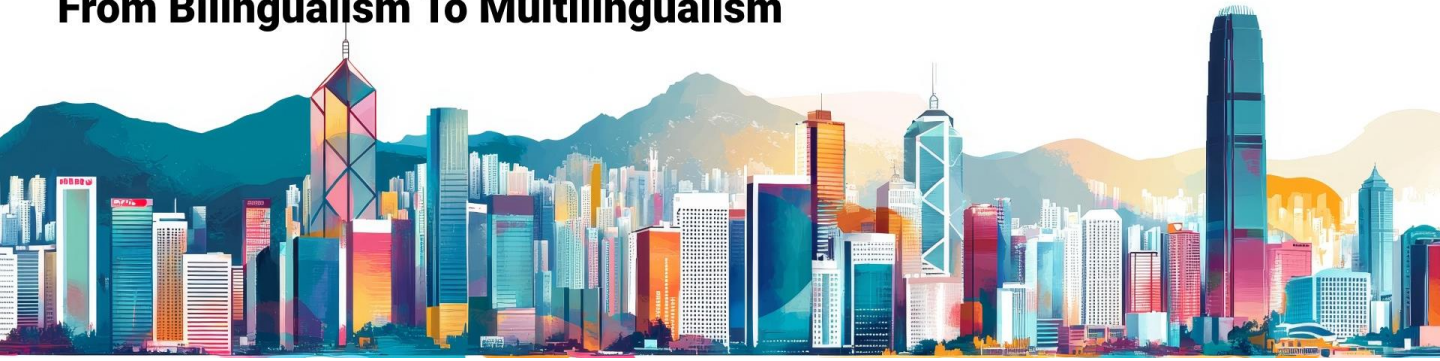
We conducted a feasibility randomised controlled trial (RCT) using parent-mediated, music-based telehealth interventions to improve spoken language in autistic children aged 2-5 with minimal verbal skills^{15,16}. Our results showed that children in the MAP group demonstrated increased social responsiveness and better parent-child interactions compared to those in the control group, who received a social communication intervention.

I will discuss the potential mechanisms behind MAP's effectiveness in enhancing language acquisition in autism. Additionally, I will outline our plans for a global project aimed at evaluating the efficacy of an AI-powered music app in supporting language learning in autistic children, focusing on both English and Mandarin speakers.

References

- 1 Hampton, L. H. et al. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 60, 444–463 (2016)
- 2 Oono, I. P. et al. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* CD009774 (2013)
- 3 Tager-Flusberg, H. et al. *Autism Res* 6, 468–478 (2013)
- 4 Zeidan, J. et al. *Autism Research* 15, 778–790 (2022)
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- 15 Williams, T. I. et al. *Pilot and Feasibility Studies* 7, 182 (2021)
- 16 Williams, T. I. et al. *Autism* 13623613241233804 (2024)

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Anaphora Resolution In L1 And L2 Acquisition Of Mandarin Chinese

Keynote Speaker: Lucy Zhao
University of Cambridge

Biosketch:

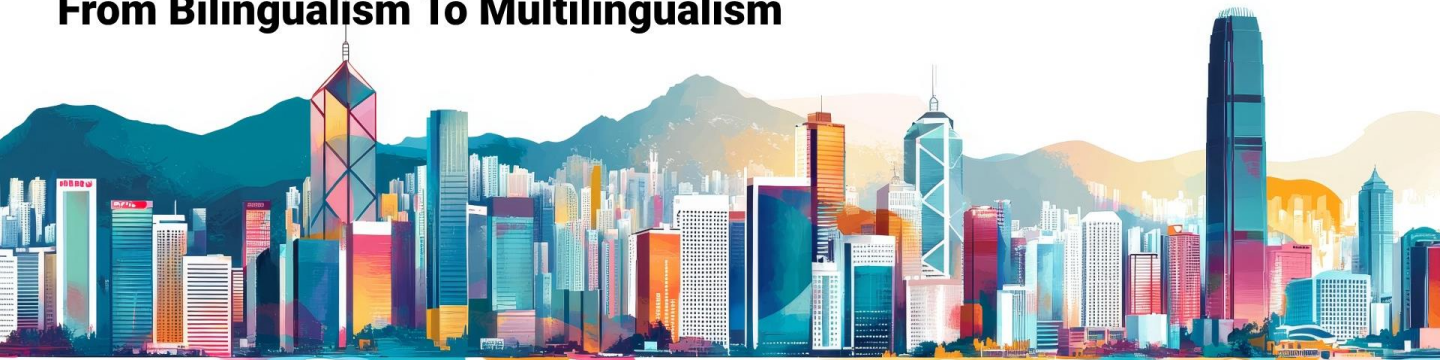
Lucy Xia Zhao taught English for a brief period of time at East China University of Science and Technology after completing her BA degree in English language and literature and MA degree in applied linguistics and intercultural communication in China. She then came to AMES at the University of Cambridge to read for an MPhil and thereafter for a PhD in Chinese linguistics and language acquisition. Upon completing her PhD degree, she was offered a lectureship in Chinese studies at the University of Sheffield and was promoted to senior lecturer in 2014. While at Sheffield she taught undergraduate Chinese language modules, MA modules in syntax and language acquisition; and supervised MA and PhD students. Apart from her academic work, Lucy also held management roles in various aspects of China engagement for the University of Sheffield. Dr Zhao returned to AMES in Cambridge in 2021 as a lecturer in Chinese language and linguistics.

Dr Zhao is a member of the Working Group of Standards, Criteria and Accreditation of International Society of Chinese Language Teaching. She is also on the editorial board of *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *Journal of Chinese Language Teaching* and *Language Industry Research*.

Abstract:

The talk explores anaphora resolution in the grammars of Mandarin monolingual adults, monolingual children and L2 speakers through two independent picture judgment tasks. Anaphora resolution has aroused much interest in L1 and L2 acquisition due to its complexity. Although there are many studies on anaphora resolution in Romance pro-drop languages, studies on Mandarin Chinese are scarce (e.g., Zhao, 2014; Su, 2020). Mandarin Chinese is of particular interest to the understanding of anaphora resolution as it differs from Romance pro-drop languages in terms of the interplay of syntax, semantics and discourse.

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Anaphora Resolution In L1 And L2 Acquisition Of Mandarin Chinese

Keynote Speaker: Lucy Zhao
University of Cambridge

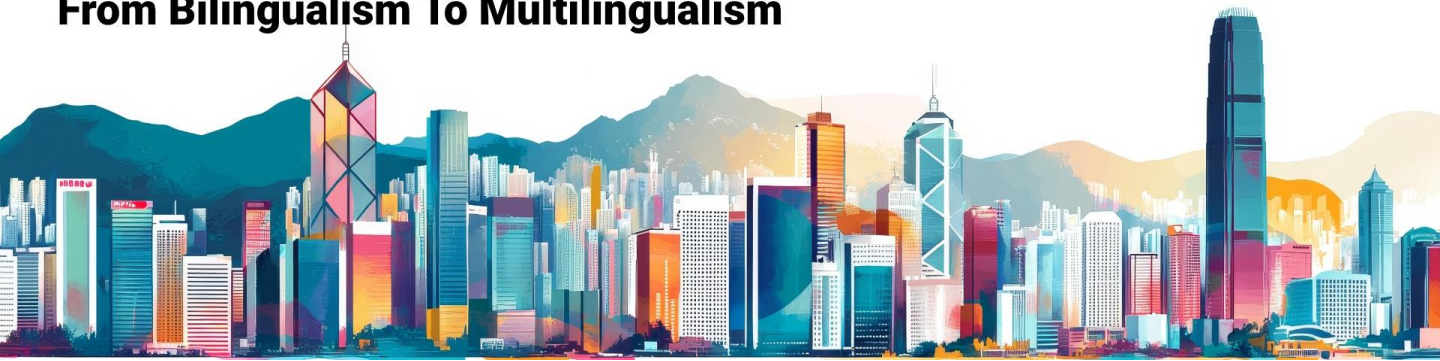
Abstract (Continued) :

Both the overt pronoun and the null element analysed as a syntax-discourse interface category topic has a subject preference in forward anaphora due to the discourse-prominent nature of Mandarin, while the overt pronoun is constrained by a language-specific syntactic constraint Principle C', resulting in the obligatory disjoint interpretation in backward anaphora (Huang and Lin, 2021; Zhao 2014). Most studies on L1 and L2 acquisition of anaphora resolution in Romance pro-drop languages have found that L1 children and L2 adult learners have more difficulty in interpreting overt pronouns. which has been attributed to processing difficulty with reference to the Position of the Antecedent Strategy (Carminati, 2002). Our studies seem to show that Mandarin anaphora resolution poses different challenges to L1 and L2 learners. Highly proficient English-speaking L2 learners have acquired the interpretation of the null element but showed divergent resolution patterns for the overt pronoun. This indicates that L2 learners can acquire syntax-discourse interface categories but may have problem with language-specific syntactic constraints. By contrast, L1 children acquired the interpretation of overt pronouns at 8-10 despite the lack of convergence at 4-6. Their interpretation of the null element was still developing at 8-10. We argue that syntax-discourse interface categories may be subject to even further delays than language-specific syntactic constraints in L1 acquisition, which are acquired later than language universal constraints (Su 2020).

References

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- Huang, C.-T. & Jo-Wang, L. (2021). Quantificational binding without surface c-command in Mandarin Chinese. In Si, F. & L. Rizzi (eds) *Current Issues in Syntactic Cartography: A crosslinguistic perspective* (pp.183-216), John Benjamins.
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Supporting Bilingual Children With Developmental Language Disorder: Identification And Intervention

**Keynote Speaker: Angel Chan
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

Biosketch:

Angel Chan is a developmental psycholinguist and a speech therapist, with expertise in studying child language development and disorders. She studies child first and second language acquisition in cross-linguistic and multi-lingual contexts, so far involving Cantonese, Mandarin, English, German, Urdu, Hindi, and Kam. Her interests include cognitive linguistic, typological-functional and processing approaches to the study of language acquisition and disorders, clinical linguistics, developing language assessment and intervention approaches for children in a Chinese and multilingual context, promoting child language research on Chinese languages, and the use of technology (e.g. AI and robotics) to enhance support for children with communication disorders and for speech therapists. She is collaborating with researchers from the European biSLI community and the Global TALES consortium to study multilingual children in Hong Kong, Mainland China, Pakistan, and India, and her team members have adapted some language assessment tools from the COST Action LITMUS (Language Impairment Testing in Multilingual Settings) initiative and the Global TALES consortium into Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Kam and Urdu.

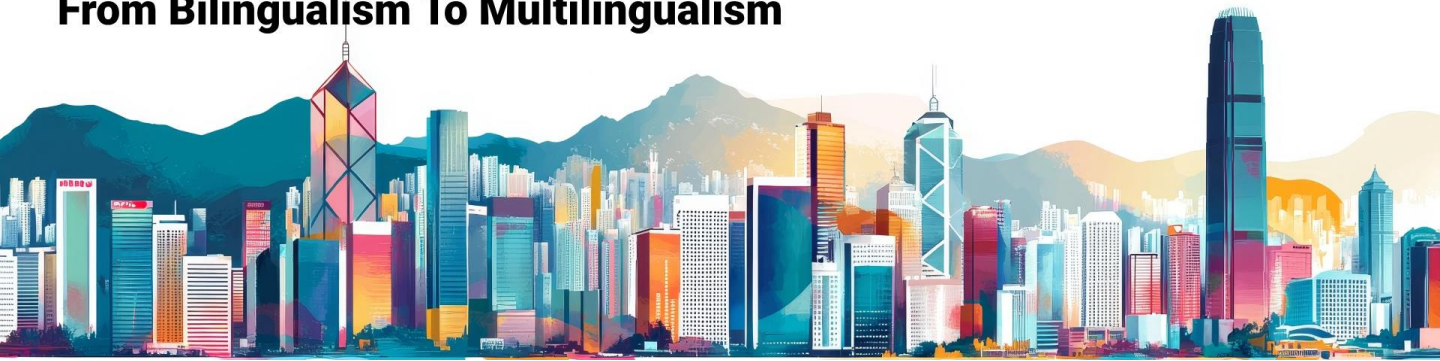
She has been serving in international professional circles as follows: The International Association for the Study of Child Language (IASCL, Child Language Bulletin Editor), First Language (Editorial Board Member), International Association of Communication Sciences and Disorders (IALP, Multilingual and Multicultural Affairs Committee Member).

For more info, please visit: <https://angelwschan.wixsite.com/angelchan>

Abstract:

Speech Therapy Unit; Research Centre for Language, Cognition, and Neuroscience, Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University; The Hong Kong Polytechnic University – Peking University Research Centre in Chinese Linguistics.

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Supporting Bilingual Children With Developmental Language Disorder: Identification And Intervention

**Keynote Speaker: Angel Chan
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

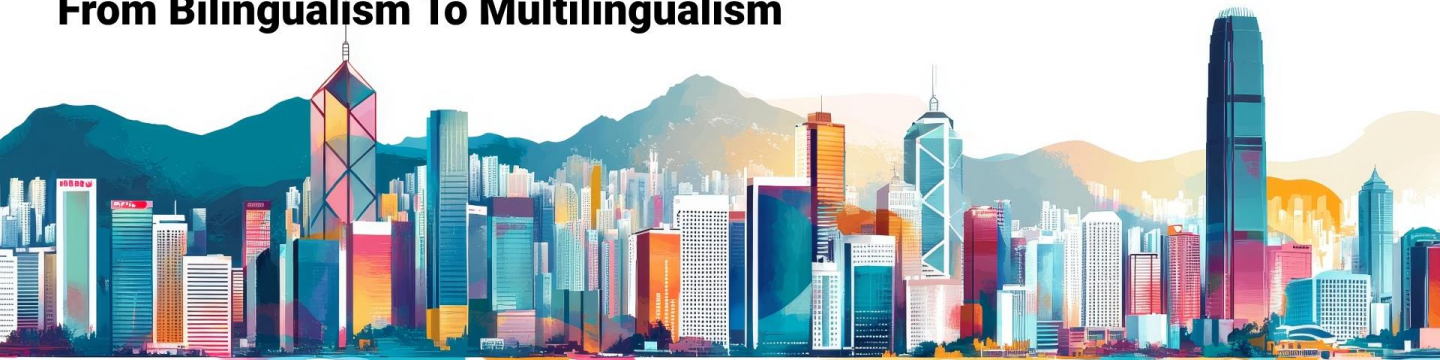
Abstract (Continued) :

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a specific language learning disability that affects 2 children in every class of 30, making it more prevalent than Autism. It negatively impacts an individual's academic outcomes, mental health, and career development. However, when identified and provided with appropriate language intervention, DLD has been shown to respond well to treatment.

Identifying DLD in bilingual children has been a major challenge in speech pathology and clinical linguistics. One needs to distinguish between neurotypically developing (NTD) bilingual children who are not as proficient in the target language due to reduced exposure despite full language potential, and children with genuine DLD who are not fully proficient in any language because of processing and learning limitations. Furthermore, since bilingual children with DLD have language difficulties in both languages, and children often need to learn two or even three languages when they enter school, dual language intervention supporting the development of their home language and school language would be beneficial. However, speech pathologists and educators often find it challenging to effectively support children in their development of these two languages.

In this talk, I will present my recent research and plans that emphasize the importance of setting a reference standard in identifying DLD in bilingual Chinese-speaking children, as well as the development of progress monitoring tools and intervention materials to support dual language intervention for bilingual Cantonese-English speaking children with speech, language, and communication needs. Importantly, although the studies will be presented in a Chinese and bilingual context, these instruments (assessing narrative comprehension and production, lexical comprehension and production, nonword repetition, and morphosyntactic abilities) and the dual language intervention program could be further adapted to other languages and cultures, to support the identification of and dual language intervention for bilingual children with DLD in other target languages.

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Input Frequency Effects In The L1 Acquisition Of English Quantifiers: A Corpus-based Study

Keynote Speaker: Xiangjun Deng
Shenzhen University

Biosketch:

Xiangjun Deng is an associate professor in the College of International Studies at Shenzhen University, China, a high-level overseas talent in Shenzhen, and a visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge for 2023-2024. She received her doctorate in linguistics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research focuses on Mandarin- and/or English-speaking children's grammatical development, syntax and semantics. She published articles in prestigious journals such as *Journal of Child Language*, *International Journal of Bilingualism*, *First Language*, *Linguistics*, and *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*. She also published a monograph titled 'Spatial Language and Event Semantics in Mandarin' through China Social Sciences Press, a translated book through Routledge, and a multimedia corpus of child Mandarin—the Tong corpus on CHILDES.

Abstract:

This study examines the emergence and frequency of English existential quantifiers *a(n)*, *some*, *also*, and *again*, and universal quantifiers *all*, *every*, *only*, and *always* in child language, based on longitudinal data from 10 English-speaking children aged between 1;6 and 5;2 and their caregivers. We found that input frequency plays a significant role in the acquisition of these quantifiers. The children resemble their caregivers in using the quantifiers in terms of frequency not only at the concrete lexical level but also at the abstract level (i.e. syntactic distribution). Input frequency parallels with the earlier emergence of existential quantification than universal quantification (as instantiated by a slightly earlier than all in most of the children), the earlier emergence of existential D(eterminer)-quantification than A(dverbial)-quantification (*a* slightly earlier than *again* in most of the children), and may explain the emergence and frequency of most quantifiers in child language (except for the underuse of *a* and *only*, and the early emergence of *again*). However, there are quantitative and qualitative differences between the children and adults in using quantifiers. For instance, the children show a stronger tendency to put A-quantifiers *again*, *also* and *always* at the periphery of a clause than adults. The most striking difference is children's non-target production, such as overpluralization (**Put some mores in*) and agreement errors (**A strawberries*). Children's non-adult-like patterns may be attributed to their developing grammatical system and cognitive factors.

Keywords: existential quantifier, universal quantifier, D(eterminer)-quantification, A(dverbial)-quantification, input frequency, overpluralization

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Input And Experience In Early Trilingual Development

Keynote Speaker: Ziyin Mai
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

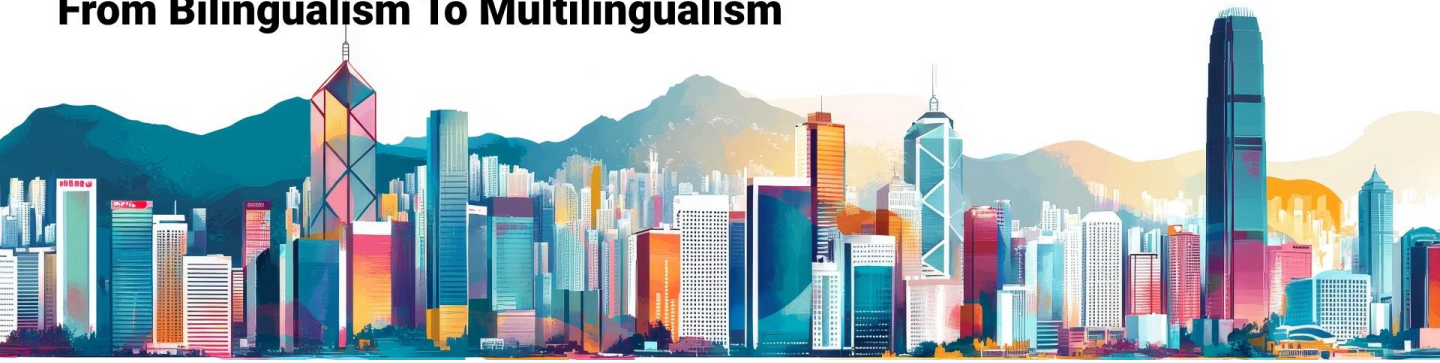
Biosketch:

Professor Maggie Ziyin Mai received her BA and MA from Peking University, and MPhil and PhD from University of Cambridge. She completed her postdoctoral training and served as Lecturer and Research Assistant Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Before returning to CUHK in 2023, she was Assistant Professor at City University of Hong Kong. Her current research interests are language acquisition and multilingualism. She has used corpus, experimental and statistical methods to investigate the maintenance of Chinese in young heritage speakers in English-dominant contexts, the (un)balanced development of Cantonese, English and Mandarin in multilingual children in multilingual communities, as well as the representation and online processing of complex grammatical features by adult learners of Chinese. For more and updated information about her research outputs and student supervision plans, see her personal website (<https://maiziyin.com/>).

Abstract:

Toddlers that are productive in three languages are quite rare. How they develop this ability based on home input has been understudied. Mai & Yip (2022) reported the case of Leo acquiring Cantonese, Mandarin and English through naturalistic interaction with caretakers, and showed surprisingly better performance in Cantonese than predicted based on the proportion of Cantonese in total input (26%) alone, probably due to positive transfer from Mandarin, a closely related Chinese language with a larger amount of input (54%) in his case. In this talk, I will present a series of studies completed by our research team in the past five years (GRF/RGC # 14615820), investigating fine-grained input-outcome relations among three new Cantonese-Mandarin-English trilingual toddler samples. The data were collected using different combinations of parental questionnaire, CDIs, speech samples in caretaker-child play, and standardized assessments of receptive vocabulary. Across the samples, the trilinguals developed Cantonese and Mandarin in tandem, and they developed productive proficiency more slowly in English than in the Chinese language matched for input proportion. The new samples replicated previous findings with Leo and further revealed how trilingual toddlers with different input distributions strategically draw on closely-related languages in the triad to supplement reduction of input and support language development.

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Reflections On Language Acquisition Research: From Bilingualism To Multilingualism

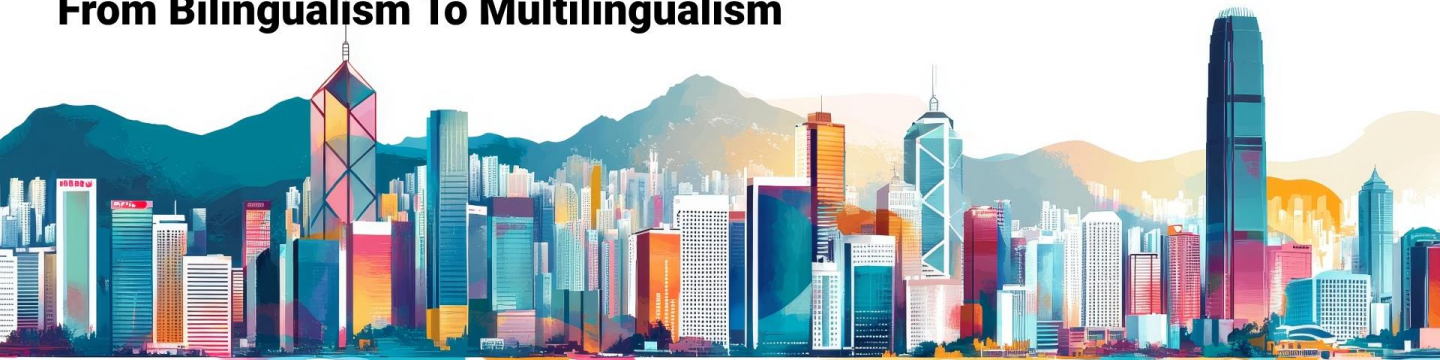
**Keynote Speaker: Virginia Yip^{1,2,3}
The Chinese University of Hong Kong**

Biosketch:

Virginia Yip received her BA in Linguistics from the University of Texas at Austin and PhD in Linguistics from the University of Southern California. She is Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages. She founded the Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre and co-founded the University of Cambridge-CUHK Joint Laboratory for Bilingualism and currently serves as the Director and Co-Director respectively. She also serves as Director of Chinese University of Hong Kong-Peking University-University System of Taiwan Joint Research Centre for Language and Human Complexity and Co-Director of the Bilingualism and Language Disorders Laboratory at CUHK-Shenzhen Research Institute. From 2011-2014, she served as Chairperson of the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages at CUHK.

Her research interests include early childhood development, language and cognitive development, bilingualism, bilingual acquisition, second language acquisition, Cantonese, Chaozhou and comparative Chinese grammar, psycholinguistics and cognitive neuroscience. She is the author of *Interlanguage and Learnability: from Chinese to English* (John Benjamins) and co-author of a series of works on Cantonese grammar published by Routledge: *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar* (which has been translated into Japanese), *Basic Cantonese* and *Intermediate Cantonese*. Her monograph *The Bilingual Child: Early Development and Language Contact*, co-authored with Stephen Matthews (Cambridge University Press) received the Linguistic Society of America's Leonard Bloomfield Book Award in 2009. She is one of the editors of *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* and has served on the editorial board of *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *Journal of Child Language*, *International Journal of Bilingualism, Languages, Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, *Second Language Research* and *Multilingual Education*. She has served as a panel member of the Humanities and Social Sciences panel at the European Research Council. She was a faculty member of the Linguistic Society of America Summer Institute 2015 at University of Chicago and was elected a Fellow of the Hong Kong Academy of the Humanities in 2017. She has served as consultant of Singapore Government's Ministry of Education and the Hong Kong Academy of Gifted Education.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Reflections On Language Acquisition Research: From Bilingualism To Multilingualism

Keynote Speaker: Virginia Yip^{1,2,3}
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract:

¹ Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre, Chinese University of Hong Kong

² The Chinese University of Hong Kong - Peking University Joint Research Centre for Language and Human Complexity

³ The Chinese University of Hong Kong - Beijing Language and Culture University Joint Research Centre for Chinese Linguistics and Applied Linguistics

Established in 2008, the Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre at CUHK has contributed toward the study and documentation of children's language development in diverse contexts. We have investigated how children acquire language(s) in monolingual, bilingual, multilingual and heritage contexts. In the early years, we primarily focused on bilingual children exposed to Cantonese and English in the Hong Kong community. In the last decade, our work has extended from bilingualism to trilingualism in children acquiring Cantonese, English and Mandarin which shows greater complexity in terms of input factors, language dominance and typological contrasts between the languages.

We consider this shift from bilingualism to trilingual development a step toward diversifying child language acquisition research. In terms of language combinations, we look at Cantonese as well as Mandarin paired with English as a triplet. Cantonese and Mandarin are increasingly acquired in a bilingual and multilingual context in the homeland and as a heritage language in overseas communities. Bilingual and multilingual development of Chinese languages provides a lens through which to view the interaction of languages and identify vulnerable domains that would go unnoticed if only monolingual acquisition was observed. Examples of cross-linguistic influence and vulnerable domains will be discussed.

Compared to bilingual development, multilingual development is largely uncharted territory which holds tremendous fascination for researchers. Despite the daunting challenges and formidable complexity inherent in the multiple variables, exciting discoveries will be made as we conduct systematic studies of multilingual children acquiring languages in diverse contexts.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



An Investigation Of Mandarin Tone Perception Among Korean-Chinese Bilinguals In Yanbian District: A Comparative Study Based On Different Age Groups

Invited Speaker: Yao Lu
Peking University

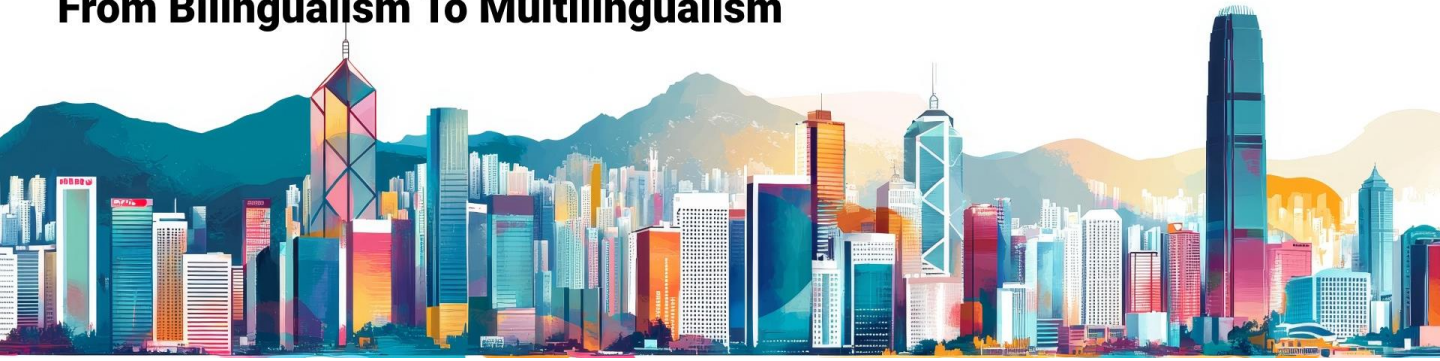
Biosketch:

陆尧，女，汉族，河南信阳人，现为北京大学中文系、北京大学语言学实验室（教育部首批哲学社会科学实验室）研究员、助理教授，中国语音学会（PCC）会员。先后毕业于华中师范大学、北京大学，获文学博士学位。2010年至2011年任教于荷兰莱顿大学汉学系，2012年至2022年就职于中国人民大学，曾任政策研究室主任、副研究馆员。2023年入职北京大学中文系。

Abstract:

This study employs a classic categorical perception experiment paradigm to investigate the perceptual characteristics of Mandarin tones among elderly Yanbian Korean-Chinese bilinguals and compares the results with previous studies on younger participants. The experimental results indicate that the elderly participants cannot distinguish between the Mandarin rising tone (T2) and falling-rising tone (T3), but can distinguish other Mandarin tone categories. Compared to the younger group, the elderly participants exhibit significantly weaker categorization of other Mandarin tone continua, characterized by wider boundary widths (Wbc) and lower peak values (Ppk). The experimental results, combined with a language background survey, demonstrate that language experience is the primary factor leading to the weaker tone categorization degree of elderly Yanbian Korean-Chinese bilinguals compared to younger ones. Additionally, the influence of aging may also contribute to the reduced categorization of Mandarin tones among elderly participants. The low categorization level of T2-T3 perception is consistent with research findings on Mandarin learners with different native language backgrounds, indicating that the similarity in acoustic features between these two tone categories poses greater difficulties for second language learners in acquisition and perception.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Sentence-final Particles In Bilingual Adult And Child Mandarin Chinese

Invited Speaker: Shanshan Yan
Peking University

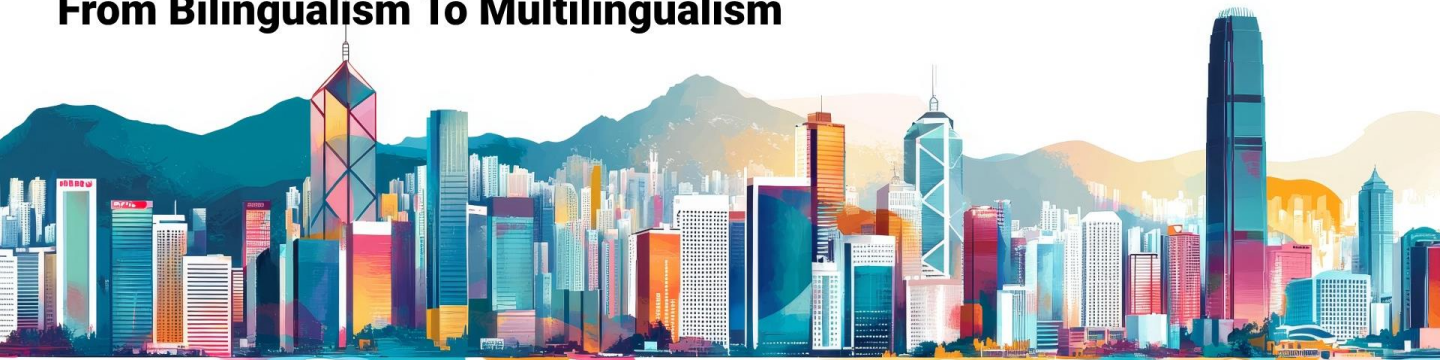
Biosketch:

闫姗姗，女，籍贯河北邢台沙河市。2009年于兰州大学文学院获学士学位（汉语言文学专业），同年推荐免试至北京大学对外汉语教育学院攻读汉语国际教育专业，于2012年获硕士学位，并于同年获剑桥大学硕士全额奖学金赴剑桥大学教育系（Faculty of Education）攻读第二语言教育研究专业（Research in Second Language Education），于2013年获硕士学位（MPhil），同年获剑桥大学博士全额奖学金至剑桥大学亚洲与中东研究系（Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies）攻读语言学及应用语言学专业（Linguistics and Language Acquisition），于2018年获博士学位（PhD）。现为北京大学对外汉语教育学院助理教授、研究员、硕士生导师。

Abstract:

Mandarin Chinese sentence-final particles bear semantic, syntactic, and discourse features (Paul and Yan, 2022), which are realized by different linguistic elements in English. In this talk I will present our recent work examining cross-linguistic influence in the acquisition of four sentence-final particles (le, ma, ne, and ba) by adult L2 and heritage learners of Mandarin Chinese. Findings will demonstrate that while the complex semantics-syntax and discourse-syntax interactions are not always problematic, pure syntactic features may pose great difficulties in the course of L2 acquisition. I will further show that early and richer exposure to Chinese usually, but not always, facilitates the acquisition of the particles. Finally, I will share some preliminary results from an ongoing PKU-CUHK collaboration investigating sentence-final particles with modal meanings in Mandarin-English bilingual children.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Expressive Narrative Competence In Left-behind Ethnic Minority Children In China: Evidence From Yi And Kam Children

Invited Speaker: Wenchun Yang
Xi'an Jiaotong University

Biosketch:

Yang Wenchun is Associate Professor at Xi'an Jiaotong University. She received a Fritz Thyssen fellowship for postdoctoral research at Leibniz-Centre General Linguistics (ZAS), Berlin, from 2020-2022. Prior to that, she completed her PhD in Linguistics at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and obtained her MA in Chinese Linguistics and Language Acquisition from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research interests lie in children's acquisition of Mandarin and ethnic minority languages in China in monolingual and bilingual contexts. She has published in international journals including *Cognition*, *Applied Psycholinguistics*, *Journal of Child Language*, etc. She has adapted a narrative assessment tool, the Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives for two minority languages in China, Kam and Tibetan, and built a corpus of Kam-speaking children's narratives which is published on the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities Archive.

Abstract:

Wenchun Yang¹, Angel Chan², Natalia Gagarina³

¹School of Foreign Studies, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an

²Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, HK

³Leibniz-Centre General Linguistics (ZAS), Berlin

This talk features children raised in a distinctly unique linguistic and sociocultural environment. They typically live in remote rural areas and are 'left behind' as their parent(s) go to cities for employment (SCPRC 2016). Narrative production data from Yi (a Tibeto-Burman language) and Kam (a Kam-Tai language) children were collected using LITMUS MAIN (Gagarina et al., 2019). Thirty-nine (*Age*=6;4, 19 left behind vs 20 non-left behind) Yi children from Yunnan and 55 Kam (*Age*=7;0, 23 two parents-left vs 32 one parent-left) children from Guangxi were recruited. Each child (re)told four picture-based stories. Narrative competence was measured by two macrostructure measures (story structure (SS), story complexity (SC)), and the use of internal state terms (IS). The first round of analysis focused on Yi children's L2 Mandarin and Kam children's L1 Kam. Preliminary results showed that left-behind experience as a whole negatively predicted expressive narrative competence. Left behind children scored lower in all three measures, particularly IS, than non-left behind children, and two-parents left children scored lowest. These findings offer some important implications for policies and practices pertinent to this group of underprivileged population.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Bilingualism Effects On Autistic Children: Evidence From The Production Of Focus

**Invited Speaker: Haoyan Ge
Hong Kong Metropolitan University**

Biosketch:

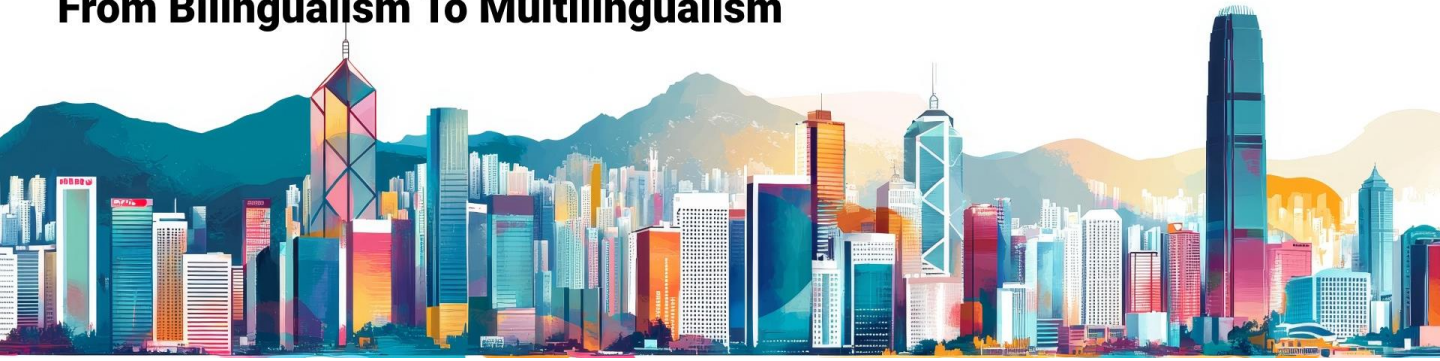
Ge Haoyan Emily received her B.A. in English Language and Literature from Shanghai International Studies University, and both her M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Linguistics from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is currently Assistant Professor in the School of Education and Languages and Deputy Director of the Research Institute for Bilingual Learning and Teaching (RIBiLT) at Hong Kong Metropolitan University (HKMU). Her research focuses on language and cognitive development in both typical and atypical populations, including autistic children, bilingual children, and second language learners.

Dr. Ge has led and conducted externally funded research projects, including those supported by the Research Grants Council (RGC), Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF), and National Social Science Fund of China (NSSF-China). Her work has been published in SSCI-indexed journals, including Autism, Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, Studies in Second Language Acquisition, and Applied Psycholinguistics. Dr. Ge has the qualification to administer and code the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule Second Edition (ADOS-2), a gold-standard instrument for diagnosing autism) for clinical and research reliability. Over the years, she has provided professional assessments and diagnoses to more than 300 autistic children in Hong Kong.

Abstract:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by deficits in social interaction, along with a propensity to engage in repetitive behaviours or have restricted interests. It is commonly assumed by some professionals and parents that exposure to two languages imposes an additional burden on children with ASD.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



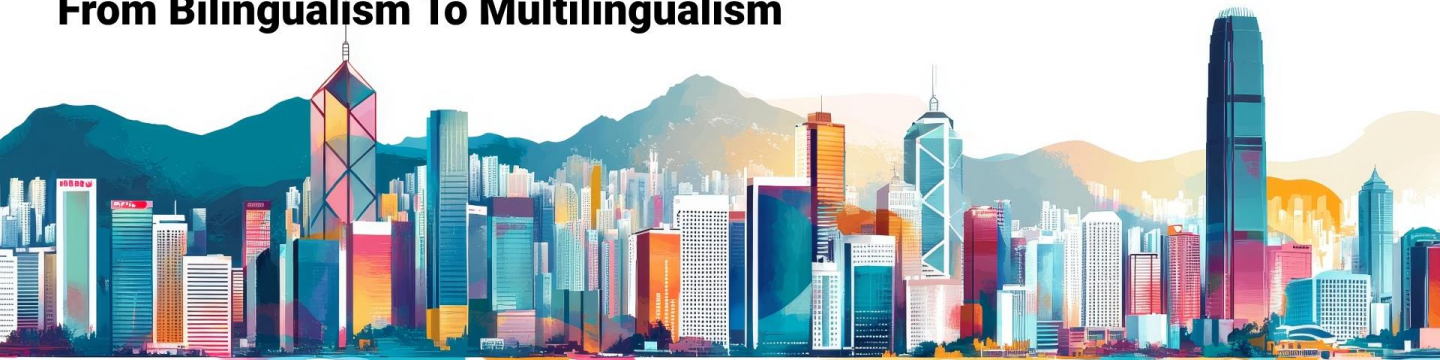
Bilingualism Effects On Autistic Children: Evidence From The Production Of Focus

**Invited Speaker: Haoyan Ge
Hong Kong Metropolitan University**

Abstract (Continued):

However, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support or refute this assumption. With the prevalence of autism and an increasing number of children growing up bilingual, it is urgent to understand how bilingual exposure interacts with autism. This talk will report bilingualism effects on the production of focus in 5- to 9-year-old Cantonese-English bilingual autistic children's first language Cantonese. A production task in the form of a game was conducted to test how bilingual autistic children use different levels of linguistic knowledge to produce contrastive information in real conversations, compared to their monolingual autistic peers and typically developing children matched in language abilities, nonverbal IQ, working memory and maternal education. It was found that bilingual autistic children performed similarly to typically developing children in general, and even better than monolingual autistic children. The findings suggest a bilingual advantage in autistic children in conveying constative information. Parents are thus encouraged to engage children with ASD in rich bilingual environments. Clinicians, educators and other professionals may consider incorporating bilingualism in training programmes to support families raising bilingual autistic children.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Optional Past Tense Marking In Chinese-English Heritage Bilingual Children

Invited Speaker: Pui Yiu Szeto
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Biosketch:

I am currently Research Assistant Professor (Ricercatore A) at the Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice. I earned my PhD in Linguistics from The University of Hong Kong under the supervision of Prof. Stephen Matthews and Prof. Umberto Ansaldo. I am also affiliated with the Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre (co-directed by Prof. Virginia Yip and Prof. Stephen Matthews).

My research explores the intersection of language contact and linguistic typology, examining contact phenomena at both individual (bi/multilingual development) and societal levels. I'm particularly interested in areal linguistics, contact-induced grammaticalization, and how linguistic and social factors shape the development of contact varieties, including pidgins and creoles. My work focuses on scenarios involving typologically and genetically diverse languages, especially those spoken in China and other parts of East and Southeast Asia. I have a strong specialization in the grammatical diversity of Sinitic languages.

Abstract:

This talk explores how Chinese-English bilingual children acquire English past tense, a crucial aspect of grammatical development. We investigate the potential role of their heritage language, Chinese, in shaping this process. Analysing longitudinal data from three bilingual children born and raised in the US, we examine the development of past tense marking in their English. These children, exposed to Chinese from birth but acquiring English at varying ages, exhibit distinct patterns of language dominance. Notably, the child with later English acquisition and lower English proficiency demonstrated optional tense marking in English, mirroring patterns found in some East and Southeast Asian creoles. This observation suggests a potential influence from the children's Chinese language background, where tense/aspect marking is typically optional. Our findings contribute to the understanding of how heritage bilingual children acquire the majority language in their environment. Moreover, they provide cross-linguistic evidence for the hypothesis that tense-aspect systems can be influenced by the substrate language in language contact situations. Finally, we propose a two-tiered model of substrate influence – domain-specific and domain-general – to explain the nuances of cross-linguistic transfer observed in our study. This research has implications for our understanding of bilingual language acquisition, language contact phenomena, and the development of grammatical systems in multilingual contexts.

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Bridging Languages, Building Stories: Cross- And Within-Language Associations In Narrative Production And Comprehension Among Cantonese-English Bilingual Children

Invited Speaker: Jiangling Zhou
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Biosketch:

I currently work as a Research Associate at the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. I am an affiliated member of the Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre (CBRC).

I am a native speaker of Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese, proficient in English and have reading ability of French. My research interests primarily lie in language processing and acquisition in bilingual and multilingual children, from perspectives of language and learner diversity, and relationships between linguistic, environmental, and cognitive variables.

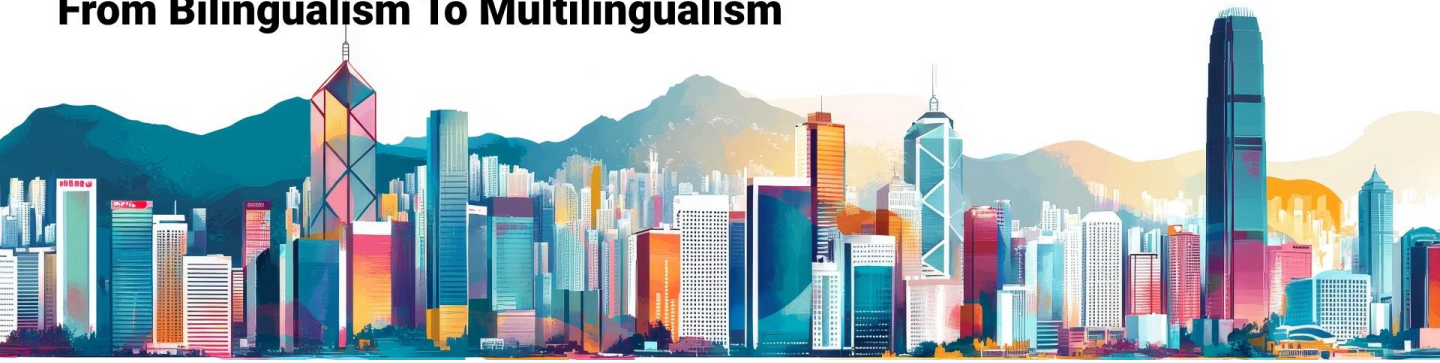
Abstract:

Narratives are fundamental to all cultures and languages, playing a key role in literacy, academic achievement, and social communication. Narrative abilities are typically assessed through macrostructure (global story organization) and microstructure (specific linguistic features). Recent research suggests that macrostructure is more likely to generalize across languages than microstructure, with children's narrative abilities shaped by multiple internal and external factors. However, most studies have focused on Indo-European languages and minority language speakers, often examining only one language, or isolated aspects (e.g., production or comprehension).

This talk presents a study on Cantonese-English bilingual preschool children that examines: (1) cross-language associations of macrostructure comprehension and production, (2) within-language associations between macrostructure and microstructure production, and (3) how individual differences—such as language input, vocabulary, and cognitive skills—might modulate narrative abilities across both languages, independent of age effects.

The findings provide new insights into linguistic interdependence in bilingual narrative development and inform parents and educators in supporting positive language and academic outcomes in young bilinguals.

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Student Presentations

Yuqing Liang

Title: Input-outcome Relations In Cantonese-English Bilingual Toddlers In Hong Kong

Abstract:

Bilingual toddlers have been found to have lower grammatical complexity than monolinguals due to reduced amounts of input in each language. Nonetheless, relatively few studies have examined whether and how individual grammatical structures are affected differentially by input reduction. While the proportion of input in a language was found to be a strong predictor of performance in the same language in bilingual children, how qualitatively aspects of input account for individual differences is less clear. This study filled these gaps using questionnaire data and speech samples of 34 Cantonese-English 3-year-olds and their age-matched Cantonese monolingual peers (n = 25) drawn from the Early Additive Child Multilingual Corpus (Mai et al., in prep). Results showed that the bilinguals performed lower than the monolinguals in structures that are realized through a larger number of lexical items and lack close structural equivalents in English. Grammatical complexity in the input accounted for an additional 17% variance in bilingual children's Cantonese vocabulary size, after input proportion, SES and cognition.

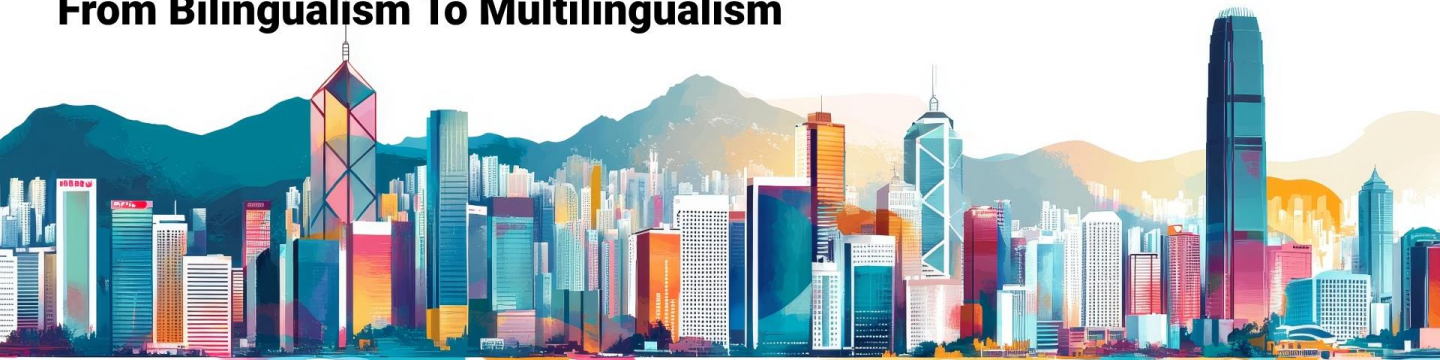
Jingyao Liu

Title: Naturalistic Production Of Exclusive Focus In Mandarin-English Bilingual Children

Abstract:

Encoding only-type exclusive focus in discourse involves complex computation and integration of knowledge from multiple linguistic domains. We present a comprehensive analysis of syntactic, semantic, prosodic and discourse contextual features of 864 utterances with only and its Mandarin equivalents zhi(you) produced by Mandarin-English bilingual preschoolers and matched monolinguals (age 2-6), all sampled from naturalistic play interactions. The results revealed largely target-like syntactic positioning and semantic association of only and zhi(you) in both languages in the bilinguals, with cross-linguistic influence between only and zhi. Interestingly, the bilingual children, like their Mandarin monolingual peers, employed longer duration but not raised mean pitch to shift the prosodic stress to the intended focus, although both acoustic features, in addition to positional and contextual cues, were instantiated in the focus utterances in the Mandarin parental input, suggesting prolonged development in focus-prosody mapping in children independent of bilingualism.

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Student Presentations

Melody Mengyao Shang

Title: Elicited Imitation Of Noun-modifying Clause Construction In Mandarin-speaking Children

Abstract:

We report an experimental study on 121 monolingual children (3;0-4;11) investigating the acquisition of Mandarin noun-modifying clause construction (NMCC, [[modifier clause] de head]). We study Mandarin NMCC from a typological perspective, focusing on three NMCC subtypes (argument, adjunct, extended). We designed a sentence repetition task to test a NMCC learning hierarchy previously observed in a corpus-based study: argument > adjunct > extended (easier > more difficult). This study extends beyond the traditionally defined relative clauses to cover all NMCCs in a language with a general noun-modifying clause construction. The results show a consistent pattern with our corpus-based analysis that a syntactic dependency is less difficult than a loose “aboutness” relation in the acquisition of Mandarin NMCCs.

Xuening Zhang

Title: Oral Narrative Development In School-age Learners Of Mandarin In Hong Kong

Abstract:

Previous studies found the development of narrative skills in both monolinguals and bilinguals, yet the findings have mostly focused on Indo-European languages and children aged 3 to 7. This gap motivates our study exploring narrative development in older Mandarin-learning children. In a Putonghua proficiency test, timed picture-based storytelling was elicited from 158 primary school students in Hong Kong, divided into two age groups (76 younger primary students, Mage = 9.26; 82 older primary students, Mage =10.68). We found that the older group outperformed their younger peers in both macrostructure (i.e., story grammar) and general microstructure measures (i.e., total number of utterances, total number of words, number of different words, mean length of utterance in words). Fine-grained microstructure measures behaved differently in Mandarin learners’ storytelling. Two semantically complex structures-adverbial clauses and evaluative adverbs-showed the most rapid development and the strongest correlations with macrostructure. These structures fulfill discourse functions in narrative by directly encoding the logical relations between story events, which may constitute a distinctive “meso-level” linking macro- and microstructure.

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Student Presentations

Hecheng Zhang

Title: How Does Typological Distance Shape Bilingual Cognitive Advantages In Mandarin-Speaking Children

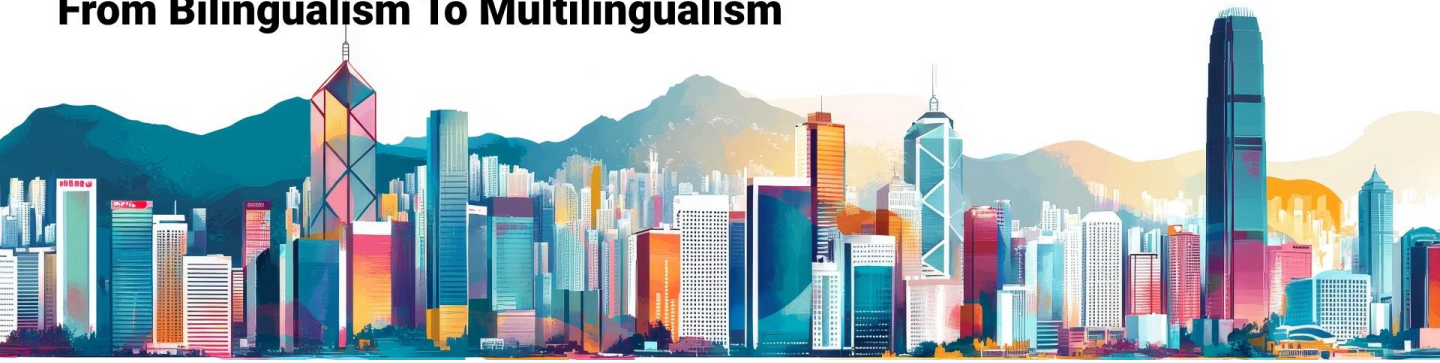
Abstract:

In exploring the variability of bilingual cognitive benefits, this study addresses the underexamined influence of typological distance (TD) between language pairs on cognitive outcomes in bilingual children. Focusing on Mandarin-dominant bilingual children acquiring a typologically similar language (Cantonese) or a different language (English), we aimed to assess whether and how TD interacts with bilingualism to shape executive function (EF).

17 Mandarin-Cantonese and 19 Mandarin-English bilingual children aged 3;4-6;10, with 48 Mandarin-speaking monolingual controls were recruited to participate in a series of cognitive tasks including Flanker and DCCS-B. Results show that both bilingual groups excelled in inhibition and shifting than their monolingual peers regardless of TD, with only Mandarin-English speakers outperforming Mandarin monolinguals in visual-spatial working memory, highlighting benefits from engaging with typologically distant languages. Mandarin-Cantonese bilinguals showed superior phonological working memory to Mandarin-English bilinguals at higher L2 proficiency levels, suggesting a positive cognitive effect of typologically similar languages. We also found that age has a significant positive influence on cognitive performance across all groups, with older children demonstrating higher scores in all tasks.

Our findings shed light on the nuanced impact of TD on cognitive performance, underscoring its significance in shaping bilingual cognitive advantages across tasks and age groups.

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Student Presentations

Carleon Mendoza

Title: Exploring Heritage Tagalog Language Development Among Hong Kong-Born Tagalog-Cantonese-English trilingual Learners

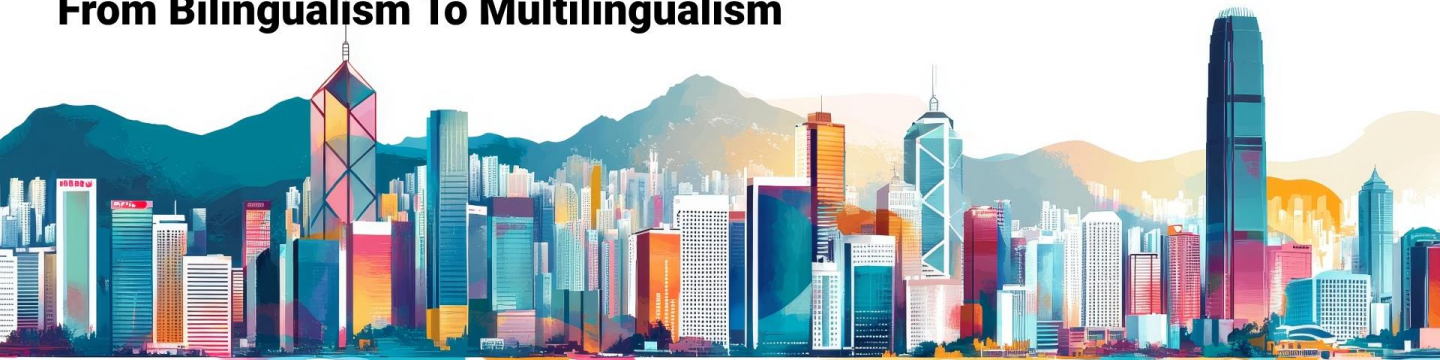
Abstract:

This study investigates heritage Tagalog language development among Hong Kong-born Tagalog-Cantonese-English trilingual learners aged 6;0 to 9;0, focusing on the influence of Cantonese and English on their Tagalog. Tagalog is an understudied language in the field of child language acquisition, particularly in heritage contexts. Given the increasing number of Filipino migrants in Hong Kong and Tagalog being one of the most widely spoken minority languages in the community, understanding how these trilingual children develop their heritage language is crucial for cultivating awareness of the complexities of Tagalog grammar in diaspora contexts.

Tagalog is morphologically rich, characterized by a predicate-initial structure where subjects are marked with the focus marker *ang*, and other noun phrases use the linker *ng*. Voice-marking assigns thematic roles to arguments, with (1) and (2) illustrating the *ang*-phrase as actor and patient, respectively. Also, voice-marking is fused with aspect marking. Tagalog permits inversion constructions, typically for topicalization, allowing arguments to appear before the predicate using the inversion marker *ay* such as (3).

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---|
| 1) <i>B<um>ili</i> | <i>ng saging</i> | <i>ang babae</i> | vs | (2) <i>B<in>ili ng saging ang babae</i> |
| <AV.RLS>buy | GEN-banana | NOM-woman | | <PV.RLS>buy |
| 'The woman bought some bananas.' | | | | 'The banana bought the woman.' |
| 3) <i>Ang babae</i> | <i>ay</i> | <i>b<um>ili</i> | <i>ng saging</i> | |
| NOM-woman | INV | <AV.RLS>buy | GEN-banana | |
| 'The woman, she bought bananas.' | | | | |

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Student Presentations

Carleon Mendoza

Title: Exploring Heritage Tagalog Language Development Among Hong Kong-Born Tagalog-Cantonese-English trilingual Learners

Abstract (Continued):

Research utilizing picture description tasks and semi-naturalistic corpora indicates that homeland Filipino children aged 3;0 to 7;0 generally exhibit stronger performance in nominal marking within the patient voice compared to the agent voice. These children often demonstrate errors such as double ng or double ang when marking sentence arguments. Regarding verbal marking, Filipino children also tend to perform better in the patient voice than in the agent voice, frequently misusing both agent and patient markers. Notably, their performance improves with age. The ay-inversion structure is rare in corpora data, suggesting that the children have not mastered topicalization at this age range (Bautista, 1983; Gonzalez, 1984; Barrios & Garcia, 2023).

To explore the heritage Tagalog language development in Hong Kong children, this study will recruit participants from Cantonese and English medium-of-instruction schools in the local community, all proficient in Tagalog. It will explore how exposure to multiple languages influences their Tagalog syntax, particularly the use of voice markers and inverted constructions. It is anticipated that the consistent aspect-marking in Cantonese will facilitate the accurate production of Tagalog voice markers among participants, although they may still exhibit multiple noun-marking errors. Additionally, the use of ay-inverted structures in their Tagalog outputs is expected to increase, reflecting the SVO word order common in both Cantonese and English. Given that topicalization is frequently employed in Cantonese sentences, this exposure may further reinforce the use of ay-inversion in Tagalog, leading to a more pronounced incorporation of this structure in their speech.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Student Presentations

Chris Law

Title: Parents' Perception Of "Home Translanguaging Learning Environment" For Promoting Bilingual Development

Abstract:

There are primarily two contexts in child L2 research, the school context and the home learning environment (HLE). With pedagogical translanguaging increasingly recognized as effective in facilitating students' multilingual development in a classroom setting, this study addresses the research gap in the implementation of translanguaging in a home context through the new theoretical proposal of "Home Translanguaging Learning Environment" (HTLE).

We examine the responses of Hong Kong parents (n=39) with bilingual children (aged 0;5 to 9;0) based on an online survey. Over 87% of the respondents indicated that they conduct English-speaking activities with their children at home in both English and Chinese. Around 60% showed a preference for language mixing at sentence level, showing their preference for translanguaging. Current research shows that translanguaging brings metalinguistic benefits to bilingual learners (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

In the case of reading L2 print materials, over 58% of parents expressed the view that HTLE promotes the child's bilingual development when the parent is "reading, explaining, and interacting" with the child, allowing parent-child interactions with language mixing. The proposed HTLE approach extends the scope of HLE by deploying pedagogical translanguaging strategies that facilitate comprehension and engagement in learning activities and exploiting translanguaging features in L2 learning materials (Law et al, 2024).

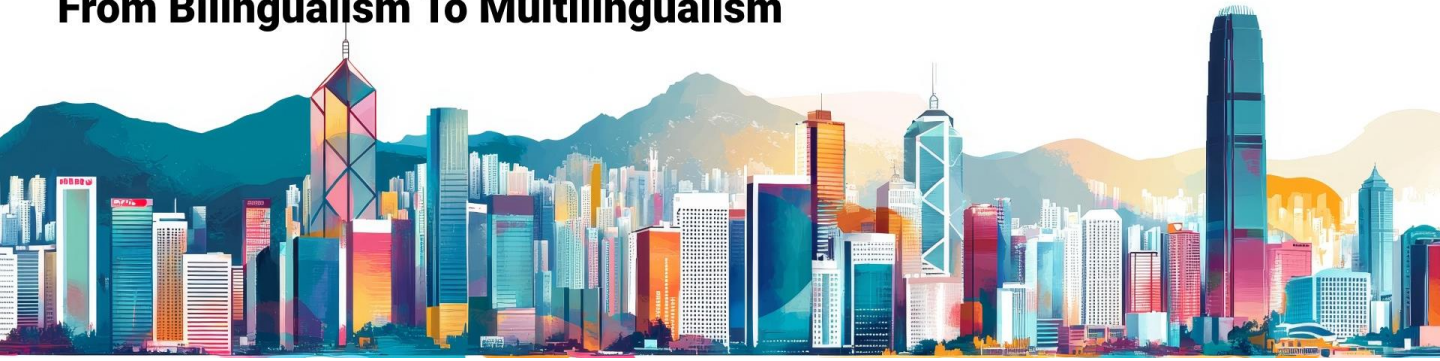
Keywords:

home learning environment, translanguaging, bilingual children, L2 development

References:

Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2022) Pedagogical Translanguaging and Its Application to Language Classes. *RELC Journal*, 53(2), 342-354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882221082751>
Law, C., Matthews, S. & Yip, V. (2024) An Analysis of English Vocabulary in Hong Kong Textbooks for Bilingual Children ISSN: 2186-5892 The Asian Conference on Education 2023: Official Conference Proceedings <https://doi.org/10.22492/issn.2186-5892.2024.125>

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Student Presentations

Danielle Hiu Fung Lung

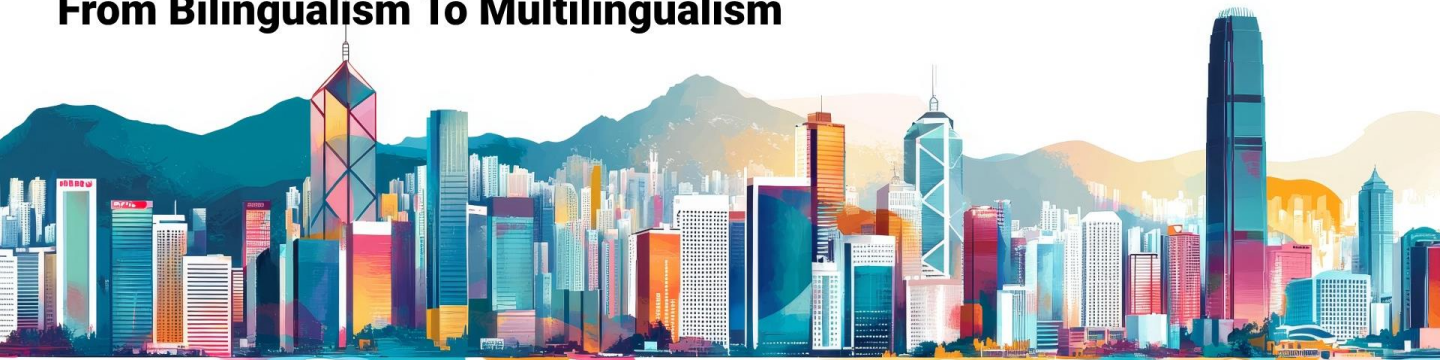
Title: Pragmatic Development And Executive Functions In Cantonese-English Bilingual Children

Abstract:

My PhD project investigates the development of pragmatic competence and executive functions in 3 to 4 years old Cantonese-English bilingual children who are increasingly engaging in diverse social contexts and developing verbal proficiencies. The focus of the study is the interplay between executive functions (EFs) and two interconnected domains of pragmatic development: (1) verbal pragmatic abilities and (2) conversational awareness. 70 Cantonese-English bilinguals (aged 35 to 51 months) participated in an EF battery assessing cognitive flexibility, working memory, and the two primary components of inhibitory control (IC), response inhibition, and interference suppression. Additionally, they engaged in a structured conversation and a pragmatic judgment task designed to evaluate verbal pragmatic skills and conversational awareness.

Study 1 investigates bilingual children's verbal pragmatic development by examining their ability to produce contextually appropriate responses, termed response contingency (RC), a pragmatic skill that requires relatively low vocabulary demands. By refining the traditional binary classification of RC into on/off-topic, our findings suggest an intermediate stage where children struggle to produce fully contextually appropriate responses but demonstrate improved perspective-taking through semantically related expressions. Notably, these intermediate productions are associated with an IC component distinct from those linked to off-topic responses. These findings capture the understudied progression in RC and disentangle the specific contributions of IC components.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Student Presentations

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Abstract (Continued):

Study 2 explores children's conversational awareness. Consistent with previous studies, when asked 'Where's mommy?', 3-year-olds can identify irrelevant responses (e.g., "it's hot"), while accepting obscure responses (e.g., "in the world"). These findings reflect children's early sensitivity to the Gricean maxim of Relevance but difficulty in detecting Manner violations. Mirroring Study 1, Relevance sensitivity is associated with IC, where interference suppression mediates the relationship between the understanding of Relevance and Manner. This suggests that listeners' ability to filter out irrelevant information helps to suppress less appropriate interpretations of ambiguous utterances, thereby enhancing sensitivity to Manner violation. These findings provide evidence for the role of IC in conversational awareness and showcase how different maxims are cognitively associated.

Given the role of IC in both pragmatic skills and awareness, we further hypothesize that bilingualism confers an advantage in pragmatic development through enhanced IC. Preliminary findings support this notion: bilinguals with higher second language proficiencies exhibit fewer off-topic responses and greater sensitivity to violations of Relevance and Manner.

The preliminary findings highlight the roles of inhibitory control and bilingualism in young children's developing pragmatic competence. These findings have implications for designing strategies and interventions aimed at enhancing pragmatic skills, which are essential for improving interpersonal relationships and overall well-being. Further work will synthesize findings from the two studies on pragmatic skills and awareness to provide a more comprehensive understanding of pragmatic development in early childhood.

Symposium On Language Acquisition In Diverse Contexts : From Bilingualism To Multilingualism



Student Presentations

Yuqi Wu

Title: Bi-dialectal Chinese Children's Early Literacy Development: The Case of Pinyin Learning

Abstract:

The Pinyin romanization system for Mandarin Chinese is positively associated with literacy development. However, whether bi-dialectal students can master Pinyin as well as their monolingual counterparts remains unknown. This study investigates how dialect experience influences the Pinyin learning of second graders in a dialect-dominant city Meizhou (MZ) and a Mandarin-dominant migrant metropolis Shenzhen (SZ).

Subjects: Age-matched students in MZ (N=124, mean age=7;6) and SZ (N=117, mean age=7;7) participated in the study. All MZ participants have regular Teochew/Hakka exposure from birth whereas only 10% of SZ participants continually receive dialectal input at home.

Task: Five written production tests, assessing onsets, rimes, and tones in Pinyin, were administered to the students. Additionally, parental questionnaires and teacher interviews were conducted to explore the ecological factors affecting literacy development.

Results: Both facilitation and impediment from dialects were found. SZ participants exhibited higher overall accuracy rates, but this was not consistent across all test items. A negative correlation between Pinyin performance and dialect proficiency was found in the SZ group only. While the SZ group was likely affected by Cantonese n-l merging, the MZ group showed facilitation from the clear n-l distinction in their dialects. Furthermore, MZ students outperformed their SZ counterparts on Mandarin tones, which may be attributed to the more complex tone systems in their dialects. Among the disadvantages, the absence of retroflex consonants in Teochew caused dialect-speaking students' difficulty in distinguishing Mandarin affricate/fricative onsets (e.g. s-sh). MZ participants' weakness in manipulating Mandarin nasal finals suggests that striking dialectal features might amplify the developmental difficulty. Reversal errors (e.g., b-d, ei-ie), ellipsis, and addition of sounds indicate that both groups are still building up sound-letter correspondences.

Three main factors are argued to account for our findings: (a) quantity and quality of input, (b) language dominance, and (c) language shift and dialect proficiency. These findings contribute to the discussion of dialectal impacts on early Chinese literacy and have educational implications for Pinyin teaching in dialect-speaking regions.