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THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Faculty of Education
香港大學教育學院

Ms Rachel Li
Tel: (852) 2219 4270
Fax: (852) 2540 6360
Email: lirachel@hku.hk

Press Invitation

Public Lecture

“Science of Learning Discoveries about the Role of ‘Visual Sign Phonology’ and Reading: Revolutionary Implications for Young Visual Learners”

Decades of research have identified that the capacity to segment the speech stream, called “phonological awareness,” is crucial for acquiring successful reading skills in the very young emergent hearing reader. What happens in the case of deaf children without access to sound? Until recently, it was widely viewed that deaf children without access to spoken language will become poor readers and face academic challenges for life. Here, we present scientific evidence spanning multiple labs in the United States that the brains of profoundly deaf people extract visual sign phonetic-syllabic units from the visual linguistic stream around them, produce these units in infancy, and create a homologous “phonological” level of language organization in the absence of sound (c.f. Petitto & Marentette, 1991; Petitto et al., 2001, 2004; Petitto, 2009) en route to becoming successful readers. Moreover, early sign language-exposed children build upon their visual sign phonology to create connections among orthographic, semantic, and phonological representations, critical for the development of skilled reading, in precisely the same manner as hearing children with sound phonology.

In the public lecture, Dr Adam Stone and Dr Geo Kartheiser, student scholars and researchers from NSF Science of Learning Center, Visual Language and Visual Learning (VL2), Gallaudet University will discuss the implications of these findings for the Science of Learning, and how it contributes new knowledge about the role of phonology and its associated neural sites and systems in all human language and reading acquisition. Professor Laura-Ann Petitto, one of the lead researchers in the field on this topic, will serve as the Moderator. Members of the media are welcome to cover the event. Details and programme are as below:

Date: July 11, 2015 (Saturday)
Time: 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm
Venue: Rayson Huang Theatre, The University of Hong Kong
Language: Sign Language (English)
Details: <http://sol.edu.hku.hk/stone-kartheiser-public-lecture/>

For media enquiries, please contact Ms Rachel Li, Senior Manager (Development and Communications) (Tel.: 2219 4270 / E-mail: lirachel@hku.hk).

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