



# Navigating L2 Pronunciation Challenges: Chinese Dialect Speakers' Acquisition of English Post-alveolar Fricatives and the Pedagogical Implications

**Dr. Wenjun Chen**

Ningbo University of Technology

June 4, 2025 (Wednesday)

15:00 – 16:30

Room 646, Meng Wah Complex, HKU

*Chair: Professor Anthony Kong*



**Registration:**

[https://hkuems1.hku.hk/hkuems/ec\\_regform.aspx?guest=Y&ueid=100370](https://hkuems1.hku.hk/hkuems/ec_regform.aspx?guest=Y&ueid=100370)

## Abstract:

Mastering English pronunciation, particularly fricatives like /ʃ/ and /ʒ/, poses significant challenges for Chinese dialect speakers due to phonological differences. This seminar presents insights from two studies examining Mandarin and Wu speakers' acquisition of these sounds, focusing on L1 interference, gender effects, and L1-L2 dissimilarities. Findings reveal that: (1) Mandarin speakers substitute retroflex sounds for /ʃ/ and /ʒ/, while Mandarin/Wu bilinguals use /ɣ/, with female Wu speakers showing stronger L1 transfer. (2) Advanced learners often retain accented pronunciation due to established inter-language systems. (3) Native English listeners perceive Mandarin-accented /ʒ/ as heavily accented, unlike Mandarin/Wu-accented /ʃ/. These results underscore the need for targeted pronunciation instruction through contrastive L1-L2 sound analysis, gender-aware teaching strategies, native-speaker-rated models, and enhanced teacher training to address diverse learner needs.

## About the speaker:

Dr. Wenjun Chen is an Assistant Professor at Ningbo University of Technology, specializing in second language acquisition and speech-language disorders. She previously served as an Outreach Specialist for the Asia Pacific Society of Speech, Language and Hearing (APSSLH), promoting regional collaboration in speech and language research, and currently holds an editorial role with *Cogent Arts & Humanities*.

Dr. Chen's primary research interests encompass L2 phonological acquisition, cross-linguistic influences, and innovative teaching strategies for learners with language impairments. She is currently conducting a study on the acquisition of English fricatives by Chinese dialect speakers to inform pronunciation teaching strategies.

