Cross-language phonetic relationships account for most, but not all speech learning problems

Professor Ocke-Schwen Bohn
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16:30 – 17:30
Room 750-753, Meng Wah Complex, HKU
(Chair: Dr Puisan Wong)

Abstract:
Current models of second language speech learning agree that production and perception difficulty is primarily due to the cross-language phonetic relationship of the sounds of the nonnative to the native language. This talk will first present new findings which support this basic assumption, and will then present some clear evidence showing that second language learners may be (partly) immune to cross-language phonetic relationships either because of universal perceptual biases or because they are influenced by “higher-order” characteristics of the native and/or the nonnative language. Universal biases in vowel perception are solidly documented and described by Polka and Bohn’s (2011) Natural Referent Vowel framework and Bohn’s (1995) Desensitization Hypothesis, whereas biases in consonant perception have only recently received the attention that they perhaps deserve. Several studies have documented the influence of “higher-order” characteristics of the L1 or L2, but it is far from clear when these characteristics affect L2 perception or production.

About the speaker:
Ocke-Schwen Bohn is Professor and Chair of English Linguistics at Aarhus University, Denmark. He received his PhD from Kiel University in Germany and spent his time as a post-doctoral fellow working with Professor James Flege at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. With funding from German and Danish research agencies, and in collaboration with American, Canadian, and Australian scholars, Bohn’s research focuses on the causes and characteristics of foreign accented speech, speech perception (in infants, cross-language, and second language acquisition), and bilingual memory. He has published widely in journals such as Applied Psycholinguistics, Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, Journal of the International Phonetic Association, Journal of Phonetics, Memory, Speech Communication, and Studies in Second Language Acquisition.

Further information is available at:
https://scholar.google.dk/citations?user=d5h977MAAAAAJ&hl=da&oi=ao

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