Emotional Prosody as Communicative Signals

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Date: June 1, 2021 (Tuesday)
Time: 17:00 – 18:30 (HK Time)
Chair: Dr Puisan Wong

The seminar will be conducted via ZOOM

Online Registration:
(Please register by 5:00pm on May 31, 2021 (Monday). The meeting ID and password will be sent to registrants by email.)

Abstract:
Theoretically, emotions have been predominantly explained from the perspective of internal human feelings. Dominated by this perspective, empirical research on vocal emotional expressions has been looking for feeling-defined prosodic correlates, and has been mostly data-driven. The large amounts of data generated so far have not led to strong predictive models of emotional prosody, however. In this talk I will advocate a minority view that emotion is an evolutionally adapted motivational mechanism for generating actions to proactively interact with other individuals, including the production of emotional expressions, and that emotional prosody is evolutionarily adapted for eliciting behaviours that benefit the signaller. More specifically, emotional meanings are likely encoded along a set of behaviour-eliciting bio-informational dimensions that reshape both segmental and prosodic aspects of the vocal signal. I will show data from recent studies that support these bio-informational dimensions. I will also demonstrate how the proposed dimensions allow emotional meanings to be encoded in parallel with non-emotional meanings in speech.

About the speaker:
Yi Xu is Professor of Speech Sciences at University College London, United Kingdom. He received his Master of Experimental Phonetics degree from the Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1984, and PhD in Linguistics from the University of Connecticut in 1993. He was a postdoctoral fellow at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1994-1995. He later served as an Assistant Professor at Northwestern University and as a researcher at the University of Chicago and Haskins Laboratories. He has been teaching at University College London since 2004. Yi Xu has published widely since 1986, covering topics on the production, perception and theoretical modeling of tone, intonation, segment and the syllable. He has also done work on auditory feedback in speech production, emotional prosody, short-term memory in reading and computational simulation of phonetic acquisition. His early work was focused on how lexical tones in Mandarin were produced and perceived in connected speech. From this work he developed the Target Approximation (TA) model (Xu & Wang, 2001). The TA model was then extended to intonation in the form of the Parallel Encoding and Target Approximation (PENTA) model (Xu, 2005). His most recent work has extended TA to speech production in general, using it to explain coarticulation, syllable (Xu, 2020) and vocal learning of articulation.

~ All are welcome ~
For enquiries, please contact the Office of Research, Faculty of Education at hkchow@hku.hk.