

Similarity in multilingual development and attrition

Charles B. Chang

(Boston University)

This talk will report on recent and ongoing work examining the role of linguistic similarity in multilingual phonetic development and attrition. First, I'll describe a line of research examining the role of acquisition order and phonetic similarity in influencing language transfer during third language (L3) perceptual learning. The results of this research show a facilitative effect of prior tonal experience, whether from one's first-learned language (L1) or second-learned language (L2), in L3 tone perception, but also a larger effect of L1 tonal experience; furthermore, although the findings show no effect of typological similarity, they do show significant effects of crosslinguistic perceptual similarity and within-language acoustic similarity between different L3 tones. Second, I'll outline an ongoing line of research examining the role of typological similarity among L1, L2, and L3 in regressive cross-linguistic influence, focusing on the case of speech rhythm in "stress-timed" and "syllable-timed" languages within the same linguistic repertoire. I will discuss the implications of this work for theoretical models of later language acquisition and nonnative speech, arguing that studies of elaborated language contact are crucial to a general understanding of the language faculty.