

The Perception of Cantonese Codas by Native Speakers of Cantonese and Mandarin

Patrick Chun Kau Chu (patrickhk@cuhk.edu.hk), Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

This study explores the perception of Cantonese codas by both Mandarin and Cantonese speakers through the use of a sound-character discrimination task. Previous studies by Winters (2003) showed that both native speakers of English and Dutch have similar hierarchy of perceptual similarities when perceiving phonemic contrasts in English. This may suggest that there are some universals in speech perception no matter whether the language is a first or second language of the speakers. In Mandarin and Cantonese, there are differences in the distribution of plosives and nasals in the coda position. We would like to see whether Mandarin and Cantonese speakers will observe the same hierarchy of perceptual similarities when perceiving phonemic contrasts in Cantonese codas. Moreover, we are interested to see whether the phonological system of the native language will have any effect on speakers' perception of another language. We have used error analysis and analysis of perceptual distance in analyzing the responses made by the participants in the discrimination task. Some similarities and differences on hierarchy of perceptual similarities between Mandarin and Cantonese speakers were observed in the experiment. Results showed that both universal hierarchies on perceptual distance and influence from native language would need to be considered in order to explore the competence of the phonological system of a second language speaker. However, as the results also showed that native Cantonese speakers also encountered difficulties in distinguishing phonemic contrast in Cantonese codas, an effect of input may also need to be considered when accounting for the errors made by Mandarin speakers.

Reference:

Winters, S. (2003). *Empirical investigations into the perceptual and articulatory origins of cross-linguistic asymmetries in place assimilation*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University.

Correspondence: Patrick Chun Kau Chu, patrickhk@cuhk.edu.hk, G14, Fung King Hey Building, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong