

Introduction

JEN HAY and PAUL WARREN

*University of Canterbury
Victoria University of Wellington*

This inaugural issue of the new *Laboratory Phonology* journal presents selected papers from the ‘Laboratory Phonology 11’ conference held at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand from 30th June to 2nd July 2008. This is the first of two issues of the journal that will contain papers from that conference.

The overall theme of the conference was ‘Phonetic Detail in the Lexicon’, and the subtheme featured in this issue explores the particular role of socio-indexical knowledge, in the interface between phonology, phonetics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. This topic encompasses several general research questions.

First, is the phonetic detail associated with representations for words in the mental lexicon also linked to social information? That is, do the memories that language users have for words that they have experienced contain not only details of how these words sounded on individual occurrences, but also (at least) some of the details of who spoke these words, their social affiliation(s), the social context in which the words were uttered, and so on.

Second, how and to what extent do social expectations about a speaker affect speech perception? If our memories for words include both phonetic details and social information relating to the occurrence of words uttered with those details, then we might expect linkages to develop between social and phonetic detail in listeners’ lexicons. Are listeners sensitive to these linkages in their interpretation of what they hear? Do they adjust their perceptual expectations to reflect both linguistic and non-linguistic information about the social characteristics of the speaker?

Is speaker-specific detail stored in the lexicon? That is, do our memories for words include not just broad categorisations, such as the indexing of regional dialect, but also much finer detail that relates to individual speakers, potentially of course as members of an intersection of multiple broader groupings?

Paul Foulkes’ paper, based on his invited plenary talk, gives an excellent overview of the all-pervasiveness of socio-indexical knowledge. He argues for a model of speech production, perception and phonology in which socio-indexical knowledge plays a central role, and advocates exemplar theory as

the most promising current candidate in this regard. The contributions by Drager, Clopper et al. and Mack all provide compelling data from a variety of perception experiments, together showing quite clearly that a listener's previous linguistic and social experience are jointly brought to bear to affect both linguistic and social judgments.

Smith et al. provide an innovative perspective on the question of socio-indexical knowledge. They bring a semantic perspective to the question of what kind of knowledge this really is. Finally within this theme, Munson provides a commentary on the other papers, and elaborates a model that might give promising direction for understanding the role of socio-indexical knowledge in speech production and perception.

In addition, this issue offers two non-thematic papers from the conference, which shed light on aspects of speech perception and processing. Both of these bring cross-linguistic evidence in support of their claims. Babel and Johnson argue that there is a stage of prelinguistic, auditory-only processing which can be observed at very fast response times. Kabak et al. investigate word-segmentation strategies in Turkish and French. They show that listeners can use both stress and vowel harmony patterns to facilitate segmentation.

All of the papers in this issue further our understanding of the representations and processes involved in producing and perceiving speech sounds, and thus further the laboratory phonology agenda.

For financial support of the Laboratory Phonology 11 conference, we would like to thank Victoria University of Wellington, the University of Canterbury, the Australasian Speech Science and Technology Association, the International Conference Fund of the Royal Society of New Zealand, and the US National Science Foundation. Our gratitude also goes to the committee of Laboratory Phonology conference organizers for their work in establishing the Association for Laboratory Phonology and the Laboratory Phonology journal. We are also very grateful to the reviewers who carried out peer scrutiny of the papers in this issue, and to Jacqui Nokes for her help in the editorial process.