Abstract:

Research on borrowing has argued that perception crucially affects how loanwords are adapted in the borrowing language. Previous results are extended by examining how phonetic details produced by non-bilingual borrowers ("disseminators") are interpreted by monolinguals of the borrowing language community ("recipients") when they establish underlying representations for phonotactically illegal loanwords based on the productions of the disseminators.

In this talk, I will report on the results of several experiments pertinent to the production and perception of loanwords. The results of the first study show that when English speakers produce non-native consonant sequences with vowel intrusion, the schwa they insert (e.g. /zgamo/ --> [z^gamo]) acoustically differs from lexical schwa (e.g. /z?gamo/ --> [z?gamo]). In the second study, English-speaking listeners transcribed three types of stimuli produced by an English speaker: Cluster (CC), Lexical (C?C), and Transitional (C^C). The third study, which consists of a discrimination task comparing CC-C?C, CC-C^C, and C^C-C?C, demonstrated that listeners had difficulty distinguishing C^C from both CC and C?C. Finally, a vocabulary learning/picture matching task confirm the discrimination task and show that even pairing these words with lexical meaning does not help listeners distinguish between them.

These findings suggest that transitional schwas are acoustically intermediate between clusters and lexical schwas, and that recipients are likely to assign C^C tokens to either of the phonotactic categories CC and C?C. The ramifications of these findings for loanword adaptation and for the acquisition of phonological contrast due to borrowing are also discussed. My attempt to understand this paradigm will lead to discussions of unpronounced prepositions, light nouns, bare nouns, and particles.