

# Vocabulary Development in First and Second Language Acquisition

HKU Constituent Theme-  
Languages, Media & Communication:  
Language in Education & Assessment Seminar Series

Speaker

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## Abstract

How do children develop structured mental representations for the vast number of words in any given language? How do bilingual speakers deal with the even more formidable task of organizing two lexicons? Our research attempts to provide insights into the understanding of these unresolved questions from computational and neurocognitive perspectives.

We will introduce the DevLex model used in our research. DevLex and its various variants (e.g., DevLex-II, SOMBIP) have been successfully applied in the study of vocabulary spurt, individual differences, lexical category formation, and age of acquisition effects in both monolingual children (Li et al., 2004, in press) and bilingual adult learners (Li & Farkas, 2002; Hernandez et al., 2005). In contrast to previous focuses on how lexical form-meaning mappings are acquired at the individual word level (see Bloom, 2000; Regier, 2003, for review), our model projects lexical development at a dynamical systems level, in which words not as individualized items, but as a system, are acquired and organized and their phonological and semantic representations continuously interact, compete, and evolve.

**Professor Ping Li** received his graduate training at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, and received his Ph.D. in 1990. He subsequently did postdoctoral research with Elizabeth Bates at the University of California, San Diego. He took a faculty position in the Department of Psychology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong between 1992 and 1996. He later moved to the University of Richmond in the United States, where he currently is Professor of Psychology and Cognitive Science. Professor Li is also an editor of the well-known international peer-reviewed journal: *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*.

This seminar is co-organized by  
the Faculty of Education and the Department of Linguistics,  
School of Humanities, the Faculty of Arts, HKU.

**All are Welcome. Enquiries: 2859 2395**