

The University of Hong Kong
Department of Psychology

Departmental Seminar

***Are radicals in Chinese characters position general
or position specific?***

Date: May 22, 2012 (Tuesday)
Time: 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Venue: Room 624, Knowles Building, HKU
Speaker: Dr. I-Fan Su
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The representation of spatial positions of letters or graphemes in written words is crucial to achieve correct word recognition and production in alphabetic scripts. The graphic form of Chinese characters, on the other hand, differs dramatically as character components or radicals are arranged in a square shape of constant size. Thus the issue of how radical units in characters are structurally represented has led to at least two proposals. The multilevel interactive-activation model (Taft & Zhu, 1997) postulates that radicals are specified for position of occurrence within a character. In contrast, the lexical constituency model (Perfetti, Liu, & Tan, 2006) assumes a role of structural configuration of character in recognition. Through two studies using a lexical decision task with a masked priming paradigm and the recording of event related potentials, we show that both configuration and position specific radicals impact on character recognition and in particular during early visual word form processing.