

The University of Hong Kong
Department of Psychology

Departmental Seminar

The role of lexical expertise in skilled reading

Date: July 17, 2013 (Wednesday)
Time: 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Venue: Social Sciences Chamber, 11/F, The Jockey Club Tower,
Centennial Campus, HKU
Speaker: Professor Sally Andrews
Professor
School of Psychology
The University of Sydney

Most theories and computational models of skilled reading have been built upon average data for unselected samples of university students, reflecting an implicit assumption that all skilled readers read in the same way. I will review evidence that challenges this assumption by demonstrating that individual differences in measures of written language proficiency predict systematic variability in both the early stages of lexical retrieval, indexed by masked priming tasks, and in eye movement measures of lexical retrieval during sentence processing. These data are consistent with Perfetti's (1992, 2007) lexical quality hypothesis which argues that skilled reading depends on precise, fully-specified orthographic representations that support rapid, autonomous, context-free lexical retrieval. Such 'lexical expertise' modulates the 'division of labour' between lexical and contextual processes during sentence processing: optimally efficient reading of English relies on a 'bottom-up' lexical retrieval strategy that conserves attentional resources for comprehension. I will conclude by discussing whether effects of lexical expertise are likely to be specific to English or general across languages and speculating on the implications of the lexical quality hypothesis for issues in bilingual processing.