

The University of Hong Kong

**Department of Linguistics**  
**Seminar Series** presents

SCHOOL of  
HUMANITIES  
FACULTY OF ARTS

**Dr. Guri Bordal Steien**  
University of Oslo

**The role of typological  
distance in second  
language acquisition  
of tones:  
the case of Swahili and Lingala  
learners of Norwegian**

**29 January 2016, 3:30pm**  
**Run Run Shaw Tower 7.58, Centennial Campus**

The goal of the present study is to investigate to what extent speakers of lexical tone languages have an advantage over speakers of non tonal languages in the acquisition of non-native tone systems. More precisely, I look at to what degree second language (L2) users of Norwegian master the realization of tonal patterns in spontaneous speech. Participants in this study were two groups of four multilingual speakers each, having a tone language (Lingala) and a non-tonal language (Swahili) as their respective dominant languages. Two native speakers of East Norwegian served as a reference. For each speaker, a total of 60 accentual phrases (APs) containing East Norwegian words with accent 1 (L\*H<sup>-</sup>) and accent 2 (H\*LH<sup>-</sup>), respectively, were identified and annotated using Praat. Instrumental analysis involved measurement of fundamental frequency (f0, expressed in semitones) in vowels carrying phonological labels L\*, H\* and H<sup>-</sup>. I will discuss the results in the light of prosodic typology.

**Dr. Guri Bordal Steien** holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Université Paris Ouest Nanterre la Défense (France) and the University of Oslo (Norway). She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan at the University of Oslo. Her research focuses on phonological aspects of language contact and second language acquisition, and she is particularly interested in tones and intonation.