



# ASSTA Newsletter

Vol 36 No.1

May 2020

## IN THIS ISSUE

# Editorial

Welcome to the first ASSTA Newsletter for 2020! It has been quite a while since the last issue.

This issue starts with the President's report from Felicity Cox which highlights current events and the ones from the last year.

There are two lab reports in this issue. These are from the phonetics labs in the University of Melbourne , Macquarie University.

We also have news from La Trobe University as well as five conference reports written by our members whose attendance was supported by ASSTA.

Finally, there are two announcements about two ARC funded projects.

Stay safe and enjoy the newsletter!

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### Contributions

Contributions should be sent to the newsletter team via email to [olcay.turk@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:olcay.turk@vuw.ac.nz) as plain text or as an attachment in Rich Text Format (RTF), Microsoft Word (DOC).

# President's report

2020 has turned out to be a year of great challenge for the local and global communities. Over the summer in Australia we endured the pain of the devastating bushfires affecting vast swathes of the countryside. As Australians are very connected to the land, this tragedy struck deeply. The loss of life and property and the decimation of flora and fauna, much of which may never recover, will have long lasting physical and emotional effects. Now the world is in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic with the unprecedented challenges this brings to individuals and communities. Our thoughts are with colleagues in other parts of the world that have suffered unimaginable loss of life. I want to applaud ASSTA members for rising to the challenge of redesigning and deploying online courses for students at a moment's notice, for managing households in lockdown including home schooling and childcare, and for working tirelessly to find alternative ways to continue conducting research with no access to face to face data collection.

On 19<sup>th</sup> March the ASSTA Executive made the difficult decision to cancel SST for 2020. Given the uncertainty ahead, we felt it was impossible to put concrete plans in place for a major event this year. I want to thank Erich Round who had stepped up as

SST2020 General Chair and Valeria Peretokina and Adam Vogel who were planning to take responsibility for the technical program. Hopefully we'll be able to reach out to them for a future SST. Even if we can't get together for SST, you'll be pleased to hear that we plan to run a spectrogram reading competition in December as a fun way to finish off the year!

In order to continue to support junior members, ASSTA has created the **COVID-19 Special Conference Support Awards for 2020**. The award is for student and ECR members (within 5 years from PhD completion) to help allay the costs of conference attendance (virtual or in-person) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The award is up to \$500 and complements the suite of other ASSTA awards available to members which include the ASSTA Travel Awards, the Research Event Awards, the Carers Support Scheme and the Special Initiative awards. The ASSTA Grants Program page has all the details <https://assta.org/grants-program/>

Turning back to 2019, let's remember the incredible 19th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences that was held in Melbourne from 5th to 9th August 2019. ICPPhS was co-hosted by ASSTA and the International Phonetic Association, and was supported by La Trobe University, Macquarie University, Victoria University of Wellington, Western Sydney University and the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language, with conference sponsorship

from Appen. ASSTA congratulates Marija Tabain and the dedicated organising committee for such a fantastic event. ICPHS really did show the world that we ‘punch above our weight’ in terms of the calibre, diversity and level of engagement in research. In total, 793 papers were presented consisting of 407 oral presentations, 381 poster presentations and 5 engaging plenary talks (Prof Amalia Arvaniti, Prof Lucie Ménard, Prof Bryan Gick, Prof Jonas Beskow, and Prof Nicholas Evans). 959 delegates attended the Congress with over 90% from overseas and contributions from 47 countries. Not only was the technical program a hit but the venue was excellent (particularly the food) and the social program including the welcome reception, student reception and dinner were well attended. ASSTA awarded three Best Student Paper prizes of \$1000 each to Ping Tang, Joshua Penney and Jessin James. ICPHS was planned to be a family friendly congress and with this in mind ASSTA initiated a new Primary Carer Support for Conference Attendance Grant, contributing \$500 for eligible members. The grant is now a regular source of support for ASSTA members.

I wish you good luck with the challenges that lie ahead in 2020. We are a resilient bunch and I am confident that we will continue to make important contributions to the lives of others through our teaching, research and community involvement. Please take advantage of the support funding that

ASSTA offers members and encourage your students and other members of the speech science and technology community in Australia and New Zealand to join.

May you and your families stay safe and well.

**Felicity Cox**

**ASSTA  
President**

# Lab Reports

## The University of Melbourne Phonetics Lab

The University of Melbourne (Unimelb) phonetics lab has enjoyed a lot of activity since our last report in the June 2019 ASSTA newsletter.

We have had some movement of people in and out of the lab - after returning to Melbourne from Auckland, Hywel Stoakes has been working as a research associate, supporting researchers with phonetics projects within CoEDL and the Research Unit for Indigenous Languages. The first stage of each project has been the development of comparable prosodic corpora across a number of Australian languages in collaboration with other Unimelb colleagues. He has also been working as the project manager for the Uni of Melbourne node of the AusKidTalk project. We also had Katie Jepson submit her PhD thesis in June 2019, *Prosody, prominence and segments in Djambarrpuuyju* and she graduated in December. She has now taken up a three year position as a post-doctoral research associate on Prof. Amalia Arvaniti's ERC funded project *Speech Prosody in Interaction: The form and function of intonation in human communication, based at the University of Kent*. Shuting Liu also now joined us in 2020 as a PhD student. She is looking at intonation/prosody of L1

Mandarin speakers in English, focusing on two Mandarin dialects.

ICPhS 2019 was of course in Melbourne in August, and the Unimelb Phonetics Lab enjoyed every minute!

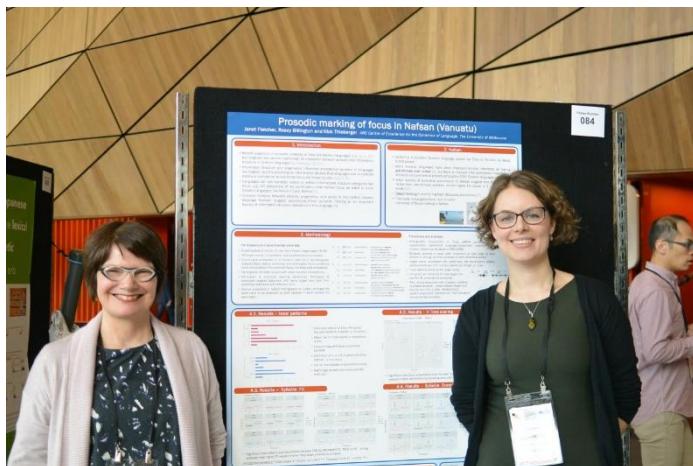


A selection of the many papers presented by our lab members (all available in the proceedings at <http://www.assta.org/proceedings/ICPhS2019/>) is:

- Fletcher, J, Billington, R. and N. Thieberger “Prosodic marking of focus in Nafsan”
- Maxwell, O. and R. Fuchs “Cross Dialectal speech processing: perception of lexical stress by Indian English listeners.”
- Lewis, E. “New Caledonian French nasal vowels: an acoustic study”
- Clothier, J. “A sociophonetic analysis of /l/ darkness and Lebanese Australian ethnic identity in Australian English”

- Torres, C., Fletcher, J., and Wigglesworth, G. “Phrasing and constituent boundaries in Lifou French,”
- Diskin, Chloé; Loakes, Debbie; Billington, Rosey; Stoakes, Hywel; Gonzalez, Simón, & Kirkham, Sam. The /el/-/æl/ merger in Australian English: Acoustic and articulatory insights.

Here is a picture of Janet and Rosey presenting their ICPHS work:



Debbie Loakes (Unimelb) and Felicity Cox (Macquarie) ran the spectrogram reading competition at the ICPHS dinner, which is a tradition from the SST conferences and was a lot of fun. This image shows one of the happy winning teams.



We have also produced some other publications of interest to members, such as:

Billington, R., J. Fletcher, N. Thieberger and B. Volchok. (accepted). Acoustic evidence for right-edge prominence in Nafsan. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (Special issue: “Phonetics of under-documented languages”)*.

Clothier, J. (2019) “Ethnolectal variability in Australian Englishes” in L. Willoughby and H. Manns *Australian English Reimagined* Routledge, Ch 10.

Loakes, D. (2019) “Sociophonetics of Australian English” in L. Willoughby and H. Manns *Australian English Reimagined* Routledge, Ch. 7.

In other news, July 2019, Chloé Diskin and Debbie Loakes were invited to take part in a sociophonetics workshop at ANU organised by Catherine Travis, Ksenia Gnevsheva, James Grama and Simón González. The group consists of a number of ASSTA members, and has had various outputs since the meeting. One example is:

Diskin et al. (2019). The emergence of the discourse-pragmatic marker ‘just’: linking changes in usage to changes in pronunciation. Paper presented at the *Linguistic Society of New Zealand Conference*, University of Canterbury, New Zealand.

And importantly, the group has a great name – CCC, or “The Canberra Corpus Collective!”



The Image shows from L-R James Brand, Gerry Docherty, Catherine Travis, James Grama, Ksenia Gnevsheva, Chloé Diskin, Jen Hay, Katie Drager, Debbie Loakes.

Unimelb student and ECR members also enjoyed some research and conference trips before the Australian borders closed (!!). In 2019, Catalina Torres had a three-week visit to the Laboratoire Parole et Langage in Aix-en-Provence, to carry out a perception experiment in collaboration with Pauline Welby. This was financed by the University of Melbourne French Trust Fund. From September–November 2019, Rosey Billington undertook fieldwork on the island of Efate in Vanuatu, continuing with research on the Nafsan language and also beginning data collection for other languages of Vanuatu.

Finishing up 2019, some of the Unimelb phonetics team taught CoEDL Summer School courses in December. Katie Jepson and Josh Clothier taught *A welcome to R and RStudio for fresh users*, and Janet Fletcher, Rosey Billington and Debbie Loakes taught a course called “Prosody”.

# Macquarie University Phonetics Lab

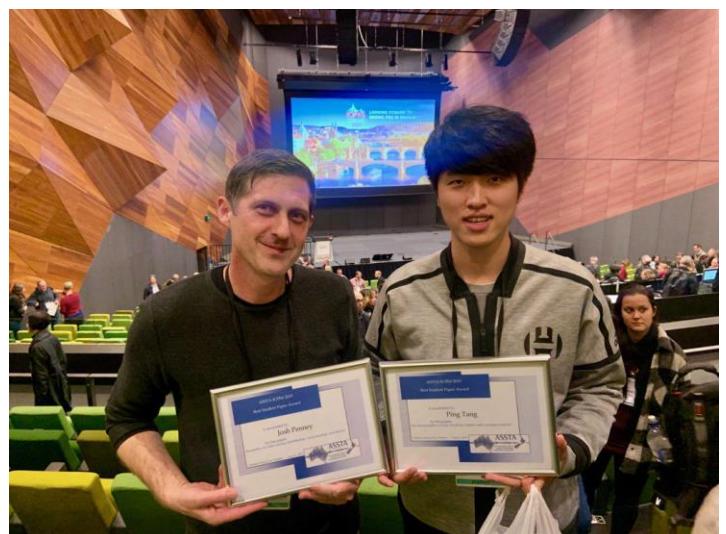
The Macquarie Phonetics Lab and Child Language Lab have been very active over the past year with the publication of 25 journal papers/book chapters and 14 full conference proceedings. Members have given conference presentations at prestigious meetings such as ICPHS, Interspeech, and Boston University Conference on Language Development. We are working in many diverse areas including sociophonetics, child language development, diversity in Australian English, articulatory phonology, prosodic phonology, production and perception of liquid consonants.



Macquarie Phonetics Lab and Child Language Lab members at ICPHS 2019

We are very proud of **Joshua Penney** and **Ping Tang** for winning two of the three Australasian Speech Science and Technology Association best student paper awards; Joshua for his paper *Perception of coda voicing: glottalisation, vowel duration, and silence*

and Ping Tang for *The representation of tone sandhi by children with cochlear implants*. **Louise Ratko** was one of six students shortlisted for the ICPHS best student paper award for her paper *Onset-vowel articulatory coordination – voiceless stops and vowel length*.



**Joshua Penney and Ping Tang - ASSTA Best Student paper awards**

**We are pleased to announce the following students HDR completions:**

- **Tunde Szalay** (2020) *Lateral-final rimes in Australian English*. PhD dissertation - Macquarie University, supervised by Michael Proctor, Felicity Cox and Titia Benders.
- **Joshua Penney** (2019) *The production and perception of coda glottalisation in Australian English*. PhD dissertation - Macquarie University, supervised by Felicity Cox and Anita Szakay.

- **Elise Tobin** (2019) *Infant-Directed Speech of Australian English mothers and fathers: A high and variable pitch with a more breathy and less creaky voice quality.* Master of Research thesis (Linguistics) - Macquarie University, supervised by Titia Benders.

## We have welcomed six new HDR students

- **Tim Shea** began his Master of Research project *Attitudes of Australian English Speakers to Fricated /t/: A Sociophonetic Perception Study* in July 2019 supervised by Felicity Cox and Anika Szakay.
- **Rosanne Abrahamse** started her HDR project in July 2019 under supervision of Katherine Demuth, Nan Xu-Rattanasone and Titia Benders. Her project investigates lexical processing in normal-hearing children and children with hearing loss, using eye-tracking and pupillometry measures. You can hear more about her work here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XYotvM0sRA&feature=youtu.be>
- **Mareike Sahling** started her IDEALAB PhD project in November 2019, under supervision of Natalie Boll-Avetsyan at the University of Potsdam and Titia Benders at Macquarie University. Her project investigates perception

and production of children with a history of recurrent otitis media.

- **Anwar AlKhudidi** joined the Phonetics and Child Language Lab in January 2020, for a Master of Research project on covert cues to omitted articles. She is supervised by Titia Benders and Katherine Demuth.
- **Hannah White** started her HDR project in March 2020 under the supervision of Felicity Cox and Anita Szakay. Her project investigates voice quality in non-mainstream groups of Australian English speakers.
- **Jidde Jacobi** is in the IDEALAB program, working with Profs. Martijn Wieling, Ben Maassen and Roel Jonkers at the University of Groningen, and Michael Proctor at Macquarie. His project examines speech deterioration and motor control in Parkinson's disease, using articulography and acoustic methods.

## We have welcomed four new staff members

- The Phonetics Lab is pleased to welcome **Prof Kirrie Ballard** (Sydney University) as a visitor during her 2020 sabbatical.
- **Joshua Penney** and **Andy Gibson** joined the Department as post-docs working on Felicity Cox's ARC projects: Future Fellowship *Multicultural Australian English: The new voice of Sydney* and ARC Discovery Project *Children's*

*speech, community diversity, and the emergence of sound change.*

- **Linda Buckley** and **Benjamin Purser** have been appointed as Senior Research Officers for these projects and ARC LIEF *Little Kids, Big Talk, Wide Applications: An Audio-Visual Child Speech Corpus for Applications to Assist the Developing Child.*

### Lab organised research events:

- ‘Toward Modelling the Development of Speech Planning in Production’ was a satellite workshop of ICPHS hosted by Macquarie from Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> to Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019, with keynote speakers Núria Esteve-Gibert (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya), Aditi Lahiri (University of Oxford), Lucie Ménard (Université du Québec à Montréal) and Bryan Gick (University of British Columbia).



Organisers and Invited speakers for *Toward Modelling the Development of Speech Planning in Production*

- ‘Language Acquisition in Children with Hearing Loss’ was a workshop hosted by Macquarie’s Centre for Language Sciences (CLaS) on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2019. It was organised by Professor Rozz Thornton, Professor Linda Cupples and Dr. Jae-Hyun Kim. International keynote speakers were Professor Naama Friedmann (Tel Aviv University) and Professor Bob McMurray (University of Iowa).

### We congratulate the following grant and awards recipients:

- **Titia Benders** and **Katherine Demuth** along with Nicole Altvater-Mackensen (Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz, Germany) were awarded an ARC Discovery Project grant for the project *The perception/production link in child language*.
- **Katherine Demuth** and **Mridula Sharma** along with partners at Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, The Shepherd Centre, Australian Hearing Services, Cochlear, and Parents of Deaf Children Incorporated were awarded an ARC Linkage Project grant for the project *Beyond Speech: Roads to Effective Communication*.
- **Joshua Penney** was awarded the Vice Chancellor’s Commendation for Excellence for his PhD *The production and perception of coda glottalisation in Australian English*.

# News from La Trobe University

**Marija Tabain** from La Trobe University is now the editor of JIPA:

[https://protect-](https://protect-au.mimecast.com/s/KRLVCq7By5s88Y7Y9HZ9swz?domain=cambridge.org)  
[au.mimecast.com/s/KRLVCq7By5s88Y7Y9HZ9swz](https://protect-au.mimecast.com/s/KRLVCq7By5s88Y7Y9HZ9swz?domain=cambridge.org)  
[?domain=cambridge.org](https://protect-au.mimecast.com/s/KRLVCq7By5s88Y7Y9HZ9swz?domain=cambridge.org)

She has just completed three years of service on the ARC College of Experts, and in July will be giving an invited talk at LabPhon in Vancouver.



Marija opening ICPHS

**Adele Gregory** (PhD 2014) has returned to Melbourne after a few years "up north", and is teaching Child Language Development. She has also taken on the editorial assistant role at JIPA.

**Casey Ford** graduated last year with a thesis entitled: "Acquisition of gender-specific socio-phonetic cues in school-aged children". Here is a picture of Casey on graduation day!



Casey on graduation day

# Conference Reports

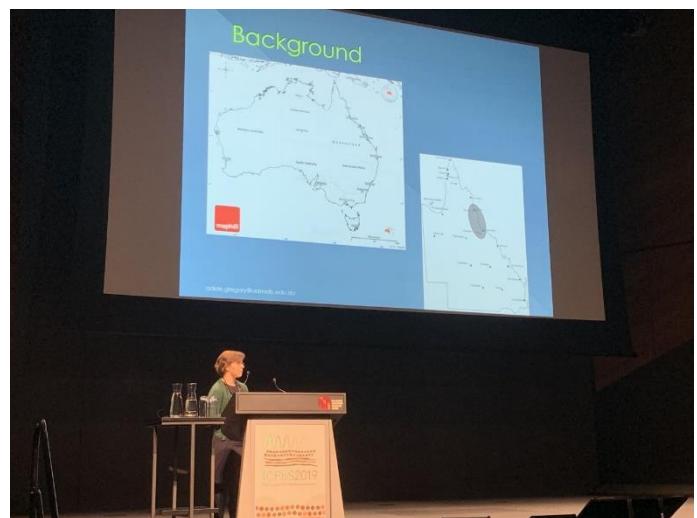
## ICPhS 2019 - Report#1

By Adele Gregory

I had the pleasure of attending ICPhS in Melbourne earlier this year, helped in part by the generous support of ASSTA in the form of its Career Support Scheme. For those of you unaware of this grant, it supports members of ASSTA who have primary career responsibilities to present their work at significant national or international conferences. As this was the first time in ICPhS' history that it was held in the Southern hemisphere, being financially supported to attend was fantastic.

The conference themes were “Endangered Languages and Major Language Varieties” and with delegates from across the globe, there were many conversations and presentations focusing on these two areas. The programme was jam packed with up to 6 parallel sessions running at any one time on areas ranging from “Scaling up phonetic analysis for the 21<sup>st</sup> century” to “The phonetic structures of indigenous languages of Eurasia” and everything in between. Picking and choosing which session to attend was hard with the common refrain “but everything looks so good” heard as each session was about to begin. The best thing about a conference like this was that there were both areas that were intensely interesting on a

personal research level, where you could go, see other people working in your field, engage with the content, and have discussion afterward with others who might have valuable suggestions for your own work, but there were also sessions that were removed from what you do on a day to day. These in some ways were even more stimulating and inspiring, forging intersections of research or providing in depth knowledge about a subject never thought about before. Some of the best conversations I had at the conference were as the result of sessions like these.



I had the opportunity to present my work about the DRESS and TRAP vowels in northern Queensland on the last day of the conference. It was excellent to be in a very closely curated PANZE session, as the session's papers had direct bearing on the others in the session. As a result, a number of new avenues for research and collaboration were raised. In addition, there were some huge poster sessions laid out in the

ground floor of the Melbourne Convention Centre. Supplied with abundant food and tea (Melbourne Breakfast anyone?) it was possible to spend the better part of an hour or two chatting with other delegates, inspecting posters and talking to their presenters. This time also provided good opportunities for hunting down those people you wanted to chat with based on previously read work or their presentations. It was delightful to meet and talk with a number of leaders in my fields of infant language acquisition and voice quality.

ICPhS 2019 was a fabulous conference not least because of the chair Marija Tabain and the work of the organising committee. It showcased Australian linguistics to the world and I was sincerely grateful for ASSTA's sponsorship to help get me there.



**Chloe Diskin, Adele Gregory and Debbie Loakes**

# ICPhS 2019 - Report#2

By Jesin James

International Congress of Phonetic Sciences (ICPhS) 2019 was held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC), Melbourne, Australia from 5th to 9th August 2019. It was a much anticipated Congress for me, as well as speech researchers in Australia and New Zealand because this is the first time the Congress is happening in the southern hemisphere. This gave all researchers in the southern hemisphere a geographical advantage, which we rarely get as major conferences always get held in the northern hemisphere. This made everyone very enthusiastic about submitting their research studies and making sure they do not miss the opportunity to be part of the Congress.

I got the opportunity to contribute to three papers, and present two of them at the Congress. This meant I had a busy time at the Congress, but at the same time gave me some thought-provoking suggestions and lengthy discussions with delegates who work in similar fields. I work on emotional speech synthesis for robotic applications, and hence, the contributions I could bring to the conference are related to emotional speech prosody and emotional speech perception. The papers I contributed to are:

1. Jesin James; Hansjörg Mixdorff; Catherine Watson

Quantitative model-based analysis of F0 contours of emotional speech-  
[https://assta.org/proceedings/ICPhS2019/papers/ICPhS\\_121.pdf](https://assta.org/proceedings/ICPhS2019/papers/ICPhS_121.pdf)

2. Jesin James; Catherine Watson; Hywel Stoakes

Influence of Prosodic features and semantics on secondary emotion production and perception -  
[https://assta.org/proceedings/ICPhS2019/papers/ICPhS\\_1828.pdf](https://assta.org/proceedings/ICPhS2019/papers/ICPhS_1828.pdf)

3. Hinako Masuda; Yusuke Hioka; Jesin James; Catherine Watson

Protecting speech privacy from native/non-native listeners - effect of masker type -  
[https://assta.org/proceedings/ICPhS2019/papers/ICPhS\\_3119.pdf](https://assta.org/proceedings/ICPhS2019/papers/ICPhS_3119.pdf)

The reviews from the conference were done in a very timely and organised fashion. Also, the quality of reviews was outstanding, and some of them did provide me with insights to explore new directions in my research. The paper submission system and the reviewing process was very conveniently designed.

The Congress started on August 5th with the opening ceremony and welcome to the country. This was a good opportunity for the delegates from all over the

globe to understand about the Congress and also about Australia and its culture. There was a genuine attempt by the organising committee to minimise the carbon footprint left by the Congress. This was followed by the first plenary session and oral sessions that happened concurrently in different venues in the conference centre. There were also poster sessions in the afternoon. Every day had multiple oral sessions happening concurrently and one poster session. The Congress had large participation, which meant the program was also quite full and covering all the five days. The delegates had to face the dilemma to pick and choose the sessions they want to attend carefully, and everyone was seen walking around with the conference programme booklet from one session to the other. The attendance in all the sessions were quite high. Also, there were some good discussions that emerged out of questions that were asked after the oral presentations. I presented my papers on day 1 and day 5, and my poster on day 3. I found the online system to submit presentations prior to the oral session to be very useful and novel. The system provided reminders to the presenters and also notifications when the presentations were uploaded successfully. As the presentations were then uploaded onto the conference server, it avoided any unwanted delays in between presentations.



Paper and poster presentations at ICPHS 2019

Day 1 ended with a welcome reception for all the delegates who attended the conference. Also, there was a student reception on day 3. These two were great opportunities to interact with researchers and research students working in various fields and having fruitful discussions with them. All the receptions were well organised and allowed experiencing some Australian cuisine and fresh produce for which the country is well-known globally.

As I work with emotional speech for robotic applications, I found the plenary session by Professor Jonas Beskow on talking heads, social robots and what they can teach us to be particularly interesting and related to the field I work on. Also, I use the EMU Speech Database System extensively for my research. Hence, the EMU SDMS training session was also very much useful for me. Also, some of the research I do are in collaboration with researchers in other parts of the world, with whom I have contact only via email/skype communication. This Congress also gave an opportunity to meet them in person and have extended conversation about the studies we are involved in.

The closing ceremony was on day 5, which gave an opportunity to thank all the organisers and reviewers of the conference. I was also awarded one of the ASSTA ICPHS best student paper awards for my paper Jesin James; Hansjörg Mixdorff; Catherine Watson, Quantitative model-based analysis of F0 contours of

emotional speech.

([https://assta.org/proceedings/ICPhS2019/papers/ICPhS\\_121.pdf](https://assta.org/proceedings/ICPhS2019/papers/ICPhS_121.pdf))

This was indeed a special moment as all the co-authors also attended the Congress and were part of the discussions that followed. I am especially thankful to ASSTA for selecting my paper for the best student paper award. I am also grateful to Dr Debbie Loakes and Dr Trent Lewis, who were happy to answer all queries I had related to the submissions.

The Congress was indeed an excellent opportunity to broaden my knowledge on speech research, especially in the area of phonetics. This was particularly special as it was close to home and provided ease of travel. I am indeed proud to be part of ASSTA and applaud the effort of all the members who helped with making ICPHS at Australia a success. I hope I can be part of ASSTA in the coming years and also involve speech research which will allow me to be join ICPHS 2023 at Prague.

# ICPhS 2019 - Report#3

By Joshua Penney

ICPhS2019 was the first time the International Congress of the Phonetic Sciences was held in Australia (and indeed the southern hemisphere). As an Australian researcher this made it a great opportunity to attend such an important international conference without the need for long-haul travel and suffering from effects of jet lag!

This was my first time attending ICPhS and prior to the congress I'd heard it described as like the Olympics but for phoneticians. The analogy is quite fitting in some ways: it takes place once every four years in a different host location, has 'teams' representing their labs from all over the world, and it's a chance to see (and hear) the best of the best perform. But the analogy can only be taken so far; although there was certainly a strong sense of cutting edge performance and competition, equally strong was the atmosphere of collegiality and enthusiasm for cooperation.

The congress ran for five days, with almost 800 papers and six sessions running concurrently in addition to the plenaries, which at times certainly felt overwhelming! This made it impossible to attend every session of interest; on multiple occasions I found myself trying to find a way to choose between two (or more) sessions that overlapped and both sounded

extremely interesting. I hasten to add that this is obviously a good problem to have and is testament to the abundance of interesting papers that were on offer. It's also of course, very handy that the proceedings papers are available online; that way I could read up on any session I wasn't able to attend in person (or for which my scribbled notes were not decipherable).



There were a number of scheduled social events throughout the congress; an opening reception on the first night, a student reception, and the conference dinner on the river at Federation Square, which ensured plenty of mixing, mingling, and getting to know new people. A highlight of the dinner was the spectrogram reading competition, which is of course a regular fixture of SST conferences. With so many

talented phoneticians in the room it was no surprise that my team stood no chance, but it was nonetheless a lot of fun.

On the final day of the conference I presented my paper on the perception of glottalisation in Australian English listeners, which comprises part of my PhD research. I received some good feedback after my talk, some of which has provided new ideas for progressing my research in the future.

The congress was a good occasion to catch up with friends and colleagues from around the country, and was also a fantastic opportunity to put faces to the names of many international researchers whose work I have read and utilised over the past few years, to meet many of these researchers and engage in discussions with them, and to build and strengthen my local and international connections. I am very grateful to ASSTA for the award and for their generous financial support.

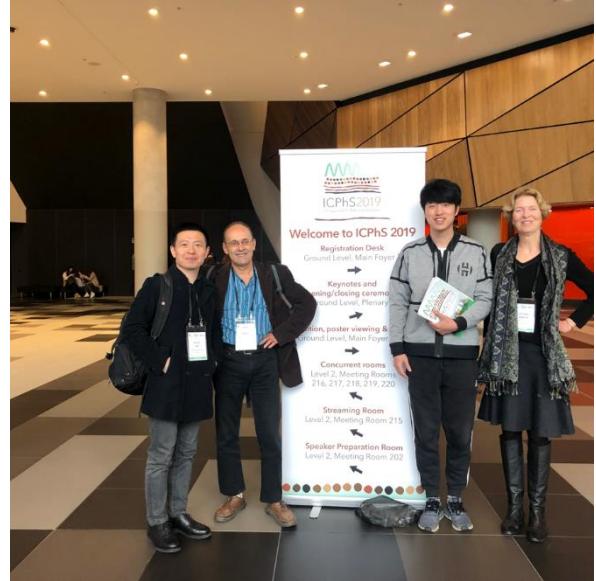
# ICPhS 2019 - Report#4

By Ping Tang

I am very grateful to ASSTA for supporting my attendance at the 19th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences (ICPhS 2019) held at Melbourne, Australia. This was my first time to attend such a large congress: there were more than 800 attendants from all over the world! We had such a great time during this congress!

In this congress, I presented my work as a poster entitled “The representation of tone sandhi by children with cochlear implants”. To be honest, I was a little bit nervous to present in front of so many people, most of whom are top scholars in this field. However, I found I really enjoyed my presentation, especially the interaction with listeners as I have received so many useful comments and valuable feedback. It was such as a great opportunity to present and discuss my work with experts with different backgrounds - phonetics, language acquisition, audiology, etc. - and know their thoughts about my study from different perspectives. I believe that the comments I have received will be extremely helpful for the improvement of my manuscript and future submission to academic journals!

ICPhS also provides a great opportunity for me to catch up with my old friends/colleagues and make new friends, some of which might be potential



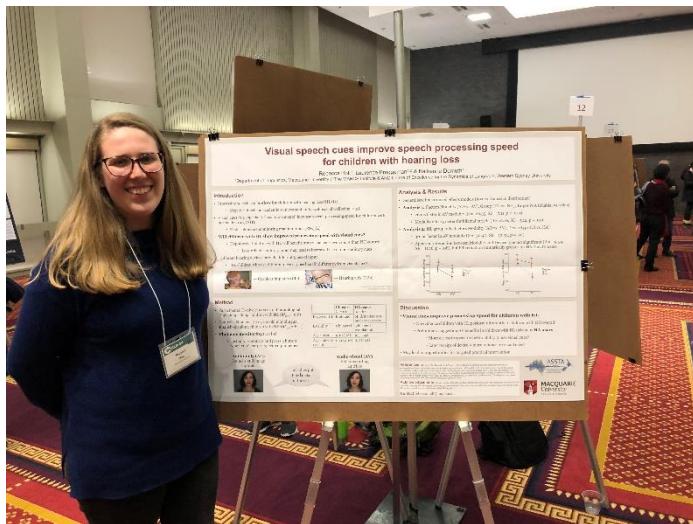
collaborators in the future. It was such a great time to know the recent research/progress of my old friends and discuss the potential future directions with them. It was also a great opportunity to chat with new friends who have conducted similar studies or share same research interests with me. So many great ideas have been inspired and created during the discussion with them!

On a personal level, one of the most exciting things during this congress is that I met my master supervisor Prof. Wentao Gu from Nanjing Normal University, my PhD supervisor Prof. Katherine Demuth and one of my PhD thesis examiners Prof. Pierre Hallé at the same time! All these important people for me came together at this congress and we had a great chat and the following “historical” picture! Therefore, I really appreciate ASSTA for funding me to attend this great congress. I enjoy it such much and have learnt lots from it! I am looking forward to attending the next ICPhS to be held in Prague and I cannot wait to meet all my friends and colleagues there!

# BUCLD 2019 - Report

By Rebecca Holt

The 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD) was held on 7-10<sup>th</sup> November 2019. I was fortunate to be able to travel to Boston to attend, funded in part by an ASSTA Travel Award.



The conference began with the Society for Language Development's Annual Symposium. This year's topic was "Linguistic and conceptual representation under extreme input conditions". This topic was of great interest to me, as my own research focuses on language processing in children with hearing loss who use hearing aids or cochlear implants, an example of an 'extreme input condition'. In this symposium, Prof. Susan Goldin-Meadow presented fascinating work on homesign and the emerging Nicaraguan Sign Language, Prof. Rachel Mayberry spoke on late first-language learners of

American Sign Language (ASL) and A/Prof. Marina Bedny presented research on semantic/conceptual development and neuroplasticity in individuals who are blind. This symposium was one of the highlights of my trip, and really drove home the idea that special populations present researchers with unique opportunities to address some big questions in language development.

The BUCLD conference proper began the following day: two-and-a-half days filled with many excellent talks, two poster sessions and two further symposia. I particularly liked the very focused nature of the conference: All presenters were working on aspects of children's language acquisition. I met several other researchers working on topics similar to my own and received helpful feedback on my poster, titled "Visual speech cues improve speech processing speed for children with hearing loss".



One of the most interesting and unique features of BUCLD was that all sessions were simultaneously interpreted in ASL. I had not previously been exposed to much sign language (the children with hearing loss that I work with all use English as their primary language), so the ASL interpreting, combined with several talks and posters on aspects of ASL acquisition, was particularly fascinating for me and presented a different side of hearing-loss research which is not widely studied in an Australian context.

Overall, I was very glad to have the opportunity to attend BUCLD, and came home with interesting new ideas to implement in my own research.

# Announcements

## ARC DP2020 funding

Dr. Beena Ahmed and Prof. Julien Epps from the School of Electrical Engineering and Telecommunications, UNSW, together with Prof. Kirrie Ballard from the University of Sydney, were recently awarded an ARC Discovery project, ‘Adaptation of automatic speech recognition systems for low resource populations’. In this project the researchers will work on developing acoustic models that can be used in automatic speech recognition for groups such as children and people with speaking difficulties. Unfortunately, current speech recognition systems are trained with adult speech, so they perform poorly when used by children and people with speaking difficulties. The lack of available training speech from these groups makes developing acoustic models for them difficult. The project will investigate efficient model adaptation methods that use minimal training data to adapt existing adult speech recognition models for use with children and people with speaking difficulties. The intended outcomes will improve access to automatic speech recognition systems for Australians whose communication with speech-controlled environmental and educational devices is currently restricted.

## AusKidTalk - An Audio-Visual Child Speech Corpus for Applications to Assist the Developing Child

Dr. Beena Ahmed from the School of Electrical Engineering and Telecommunications, UNSW and a group of ASSTA researchers from the University of Sydney, Western Sydney University, Macquarie University and the University of Melbourne are about to start recruiting 750 kids between the ages three and 12 to provide speech samples as part of a \$1 million ARC funded project called AusKidTalk. AusKidTalk aims to create a large sized, publicly accessible corpus of annotated Australian children’s speech, something currently lacking both in Australia and internationally. This new corpus will provide the basic infrastructure vital for innovative research on children’s speech and the training of our speech scientists and engineers. It will help linguists and psychologists better understand how children develop their speech and language. Engineers, meanwhile, will use it to develop new automatic speech recognition systems that can better converse with younger users of digital media. Benefits to children would include applications such as remote speech therapy, interactive reading tutors, pronunciation coaching and educational games. People interested in participating can sign up at [www.auskidtalk.edu.au](http://www.auskidtalk.edu.au).