

# Critical thinking and the challenges of AI: Some thoughts from an acquisition researcher

Date: November 28 (Thursday), 2024

Time: 2:30pm-4:00pm

Venue: Swire Hall 2 (SWH 2)

## Abstract:

Critical thinking refers not only to a predisposition to be intellectually curious and open-minded, but also to a complex set of cognitive skills lying at the core of intellectual discipline, including categorizing facts, defining a concept, paraphrasing a text, illustrating a point, analyzing the logic of argumentation, and assessing the validity of inferences from premises to conclusions.

In this talk, I will show that the development of the cognitive aspects of critical thinking crucially involves the complex processes of reading for in-depth understanding and articulating complex ideas with words, sentences, and connected discourse, particularly in writing. These psycholinguistic processes, which are being increasingly challenged by the advent of generative AI, will need to be preserved and enhanced as an integral part of university education, in order for critical thinking to continue to be nurtured.

To highlight the importance of learning to read and write for the articulation of complex thought, I will make some observations about the quality of texts produced by generative AI when compared to authentic texts written by university students, with reference to certain linguistic dimensions.

## Speaker:

Professor Lee received his BA in English Literature from Swarthmore College, and his Ph.D. in Linguistics from UCLA. His research interests lie in language and cognition, drawing influences from linguistics, psychology and philosophy, with particular reference to language learnability and first language acquisition of Cantonese and Mandarin. He formerly served as Associate Dean (Research) of the Faculty of Arts, Chairperson of the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, and Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Language Enhancement. Professor Lee is on the editorial boards of a number of journals, including *Language Acquisition* and *Contemporary Linguistics*. He led the construction of several early child language corpora, including CANCEP (The Hong Kong Cantonese Child Language Corpus), and was a core designer of the grammatical assessment component of HKCOLAS (The Hong Kong Cantonese Oral Language Scales).



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