DEPARTMENT SEMINAR

Intonation and Communication

by Professor Martha C. Pennington

Date: Monday, 25 January 2010
Time: 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.
Venue: Room M1008, 10/F, Oen Hall, Ho Sin Hang Campus (Old Campus)

ABSTRACT
Intonation is part of a complex of language and context that creates a particular meaning in a specific situation where spoken language is used. Like all types of signals, intonation interacts with other aspects of the context of communication to help guide the hearer’s process of interpreting what a speaker has meant by the words spoken. A simple example of everyday communication shows how intonation works in context to aid communicators in their joint construction of meaning. The example demonstrates that language is necessarily social and must be referenced to the joint actions of at least two people. The meaning of language is thus something that does not inhere in a sentence but is created between speaker and hearer. Indeed, the hearer’s perspective is a crucial element of communication which speakers consider in deciding what they need to say – and equally important, what they do not need to say, to get their intended meaning across.

BIO-DATA
Professor Pennington holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania and is Professor of Writing and Linguistics at Georgia Southern University. She was formerly Professor of English at City University of Hong Kong, where she was the first woman to hold that rank and win a Teaching Excellence award, and Powdrill Professor of English Language Acquisition at the University of Luton (now Bedfordshire), where she headed the Language Research Centre and was the first person at the university to win a UK National Teaching Fellowship. Professor Pennington is the editor of the journal Writing & Pedagogy and of book series for Equinox and Emerald Publishers. She has over 200 publications, including The Context of Phonology (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), The College Writing Toolkit: Tried and Tested Ideas for Teaching College Writing, co-edited with Pauline Burton (Equinox, in press), and Language Program Leadership for a Changing World: An Ecological Model, co-authored with Barbara J Hoekje (Emerald, in press).