

About the First Asian Junior Linguists Conference

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The first Asian Junior Linguistics Conference (AJL 1) was held at the international conference room in the dialogue house at International Christian University (ICU) from Dec. 2-4th, 2016. Funded by the Japan ICU Foundation, the conference was organized to provide a platform for linguistics students in the greater Asia region to present their research and to create a network of junior scholars. The conference also offered opportunities for sophomore and junior ICU students to be involved in organizing a conference, and for senior students to present their senior thesis in an international setting.

Two keynote speakers were invited to share their research with the participants. Dr. Diana Archangeli (University of Hong Kong) is an expert in ultrasound research, and Dr. Shigeto Kawahara (Keio University) is an alumnus of ICU linguistics and a renowned phonetician. Both professors eagerly agreed to be part of the conference because given their strong support of undergraduate research programs. They shared their own experiences as a junior linguist and how networks formed earlier in their lives profoundly shaped the trajectory of their own careers.

Student presentations were the most important aspects of the conference. Students from ICU, Doshisha University, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Okayama University and University of Hong Kong shared their research. The number of topics ranged from theoretical linguistics (phonology, syntax, semantics) to applied linguistics (sociolinguistics, language documentation). The official language of the conference was English, and all students delivered professional presentations. It was also a great opportunity for students hailing from different campuses to learn, discuss and share their research together.

The conference also had a practical workshop session, in which students were exposed to contemporary research/issues and inquiries within articulatory phonetics. Dr. Archangeli and a post-doctoral researcher, Dr. Jonathan Yip, introduced research methodologies in ultrasound, and also ran a hands-on workshop about how to design research programs concerning articulatory phonetics. While students at the conference came from various degrees of linguistic backgrounds (from those who with no knowledge of phonetics to those who are writing a senior thesis in phonetics), everyone participated with great enthusiasm. Many participating ICU students completed or were enrolled in the phonetics course. These students played an important role during the break-up session, especially when students with limited phonetic backgrounds were part of a group.

It is rare for undergraduate students to have meaningful connections with students at other institutions, let alone students who are majoring in the same field. Students listened to each other's presentation, chatted during the session breaks, and shared meals during the banquet; all of these activities were great opportunities for students to network and build future collaborative projects. On the last day of the conference, it was clear that the students from different institutions bonded over a common topic – linguistics.

In 2016, ICU linguistics launched an online volume called ICU Working Papers in Linguistics (ICUWPL) that is available on the ICU repository hosted by the library. Two students volunteered to be editors of the papers from AJL1. This student-edited volume will be a non-peer-reviewed online volume.

After the successful organization of AJL 1, ICU linguistics is already planning to host AJL 2. The dates of the conference will be December 8-10, 2017. The venue will be the same as in 2016. AJL 1 had a strong focus on the grammar of sounds. At AJL 2, the theme will be the grammar of sentences and meanings with two invited scholars (Dr. Yurie Hara and Dr. Hajime Ono, both of whom are ICU alumni). Dr. Stephanie Shih (USC) will also present her up-to-date work at the conference.