He is now Professor of Phonetics in the University of Cambridge, teaches most aspects of phonetics, and has supervised around 20 PhD dissertations on a wide range of topics. He is currently president of the British Association of Academic Phoneticians and a council member of the International Phonetic Association, and he is a founder member of the International Association for Forensic Phonetics and Acoustics.

### ABOUT THE SPEAKER

**Prof. Francis Nolan** studied languages and linguistics in Cambridge, and started his career as a lecturer in phonetics in a one-year post in the University of Wales in Bangor. He returned to Cambridge to complete his PhD, and was appointed to an assistant lectureship there.

His doctoral research was on the phonetic bases of speaker recognition, a topic which after several years led to him being drawn into forensic phonetic casework, and, in turn, into further research on speaker identity. Most recently he has headed two projects in the area, one (‘DyViS’) examining differences among speakers matched for accent, and the other (‘VoiceSim’) on perceived voice similarity and the effect of the telephone. Forensic applications of phonetics, then, have been an important theme in his career.

He has also had a long-standing interest in prosody, including both intonation and rhythm. In the late 1990s he was principal investigator on a project (‘IViE’) which was the first to carry out a systematic survey of intonational variation in the British Isles. He also initiated the use of the PVI (‘pairwise variability index’) which quantifies speech rhythm, and has collaborated in work on the rhythm of various languages and dialects.

He is now Professor of Phonetics in the University of Cambridge, teaches most aspects of phonetics, and has supervised around 20 PhD dissertations on a wide range of topics. He is currently president of the British Association of Academic Phoneticians and a council member of the International Phonetic Association, and he is a founder member of the International Association for Forensic Phonetics and Acoustics.

---

### Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 May 2010 (Mon)</td>
<td>2:30 pm – 4:15 pm</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to forensic phonetics</strong></td>
<td>20 May 2010 (Thu)</td>
<td>2:30 pm – 4:15 pm</td>
<td><strong>Deconstructing speaker identity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 May 2010 (Mon)</td>
<td>2:30 pm – 4:15 pm</td>
<td><strong>Technical speaker comparison</strong></td>
<td>26 May 2010 (Wed)</td>
<td>2:30 pm – 4:15 pm</td>
<td><strong>Earwitnesses</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Venue: Lecture Theatre 1, Teaching Complex at Western Campus, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Distinguished Scholars Lecture Series in Linguistics 2010

presents a public lecture on

“Forensic speaker comparison in the UK: a history”

by

Professor Francis Nolan
Professor of Phonetics
University of Cambridge

27 May 2010 (Thursday)
4:30pm – 6:15pm
Lecture Theatre 1, Teaching Complex at Western Campus, CUHK

Abstract

Phonetics is the scientific study of speech. Since a small, but substantial, minority of legal cases involve the issue of who a voice recorded or heard belongs to, it is natural that from time to time phoneticians have been called upon for their expertise. This talk will trace the history of forensic speaker identification (or ‘comparison’ as it is now often known) in the UK, from the occasional appearance of individual dialectologists in court giving evidence based largely on accents, to the current consensus, among a fairly well-established body of practitioners and researchers, on a more broadly-based set of analyses including acoustic measurements.

In order to place this historical development in perspective, the talk will examine some of the controversies which have been debated over the years. These include the status of ‘voiceprinting’, i.e. impressionistic pattern-matching of spectrograms to identify speakers; the question of whether acoustic measurements and auditory phonetic judgments access the same or complementary information about the speaker; the appropriate form of conclusions in speaker identification cases so as to help the court to appreciate the nature of the evidence; and the future role of automatic methods in forensic phonetics. A sub-theme will be autobiographical: some details will be revealed of how the speaker became interested in speaker recognition as a research topic, and how he was subsequently drawn into casework.

ALL ARE WELCOME

Enquiries: (852) 2609 7025 / 2609 7911
Email: lin@cuhk.edu.hk
Fax: (852) 2603 7755