**The effectiveness of speech training on speech prosody of children with autism spectrum disorder**

What matters often is not what you say, but how you say it. Prosody portrays the suprasegmental features of speech and serves as an important role in this communicative function. While the encoding and decoding of prosodic features seems to be straightforward for the typically developing (TD) individuals, many studies have reported impaired performance among autistic individuals. The current study investigated the effectiveness of speech training on English prosodic focus marking produced by Cantonese-speaking children with autism spectrum disorder (CASD; 16 children), and examined the potential differences in this regard compared to Cantonese-speaking (CTD; 16 children) and English-speaking (ETD; 16 children) TD children.

The speech training contains three phrases using pre-recorded congruous (e.g., narrow focus prompt with narrow focus prosody answer) and incongruous (e.g., narrow focus prompt with broad focus prosody answer) Q&A pairs. Phase 1, participants were instructed to distinguish focus marking types (i.e., broad, narrow and contrastive) upon hearing only congruous pairs; phases 2 and 3, participants listen to both congruous and incongruous pairs to learn to discriminate the congruous and incongruous pairs.

Speech production tests were designed to test the ability of using speech prosody to mark focus before and after the training. Acoustic correlates of prosodic cues in focus marking were measured and used for linear mixed effects model fitting in relation to training session (i.e., pre-, post-training) and focus conditions (i.e., broad, narrow/contrastive pre-, on- and post-focus). The results showed that CASD children had more use of prosodic cues in focus marking in the post-training session than in their pre-training production and the CTD children. Meanwhile, the focus marking pattern of the CASD children in post-training production is more similar to those of the ETD group. Detailed training programme and comparison will be presented and discussed.