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Obituary: Arthur S. Abramson

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This special issue of the *Journal of Phonetics* owes its existence to the pioneering work of Leigh Lisker and Arthur S. Abramson. Their focus on the phonetics of voicing led to the metric of Voice Onset Time (VOT) (Abramson & Lisker, 1965; Lisker & Abramson, 1964). Although Abramson was able to see his final contribution to the literature published (Abramson & Whalen, 2017), he unfortunately passed away on December 15, 2017, before the publication of this special issue on VOT. It is only fitting that we dedicate this special issue to his memory.

Arthur Seymour Abramson was born on January 26, 1925 in Jersey City, New Jersey. Starting in 1943, he served two years in the US Army in World War II, after which he began studies at Columbia University, receiving an M.A. in 1950 and a Ph.D. in 1960. During that time, he spent three years in Thailand on a Fulbright fellowship. His dissertation (published as Abramson, 1962) was a thorough phonetic study of both the tones and vowels of Standard Thai, and it is still highly cited today. After briefly teaching at the City University of New York, he assumed a position as chair of the newly created Department of Linguistics at the University of Connecticut in 1967. He held that position for 7 years and retired from teaching in 1992.

Throughout this time, Abramson continued to work at Haskins Laboratories, both when it was based in New York City and after its move to New Haven, Connecticut, in 1972. Abramson's long-term collaboration with Lisker, through Haskins, revealed a simple yet powerful measure of voicing distinctions across the world's languages, VOT. Since its introduction, many hundreds of studies have reported VOT values and used VOT in perceptual studies. Further aspects of VOT are discussed in the accompanying introduction to the special issue.

Abramson continued to work on other aspects of language, particularly tone and voice quality (Abramson & Luangthongkum, 2009; Abramson, Luangthongkum, & Nye, 2004; Abramson, Tiede, & Luangthongkum, 2013, 2015). His startling discovery that Pattani Malay perceptually maintained a contrast between single and geminate voiceless stops even in absolute initial position (Abramson, 1987) continues to generate competing theories. He also contributed to theoretical discussions, including tonogenesis (Abramson, 2004) and tone in general (Abramson, 2013).

Arthur was an energetic, optimistic, erudite yet humble person who was loved by those who met him. He was active in his synagogue, and he provided expert advice on linguistic aspects of Hebrew and Yiddish. He was engaged and productive until his final days and is sorely missed by the many communities he touched. It is still possible to hear his charming voice in his contributions to the oral history of Haskins Laboratories (<http://haskinslabs.org/news/haskins-laboratories-oral-histories-and-transcriptions>).

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