



**Arthur S. Abramson**, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics and founding department chair at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, Emeritus Senior Scientist at Haskins Laboratories, and a Fellow of the Acoustical Society of America (ASA), died on December 15, 2017, at the age of 92.

After serving as an X-ray technician in World War II, Arthur entered Columbia University, New York, as a graduate student in linguistics. He paused his studies to spend three years in Thailand on a Fulbright grant, teaching English and linguistics and learning the Thai language. When he returned to Columbia, he enrolled in a course taught by Franklin Cooper, president of Haskins Laboratories, New York (now in New Haven, Connecticut), beginning an affiliation with Haskins Laboratories that would last for more than six decades. During his early time at Haskins Laboratories, Arthur was instrumental in a project to record X-ray motion pictures of speakers of various languages (e.g., [archive.org/details/englishxrayfilm](http://archive.org/details/englishxrayfilm) and [archive.org/details/arabicxrayfilm](http://archive.org/details/arabicxrayfilm)). For his doctoral dissertation, Arthur undertook a study of the vowels and tones of standard Thai, presenting acoustic data and conducting perceptual experiments using synthetic speech.

Shortly after finishing his doctorate, Arthur began a long-term collaboration with Leigh Lisker of Haskins Laboratories and the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Together, Arthur and Leigh would go on to coauthor numerous papers and presentations on laryngeal function and voicing (e.g., Lisker et al., 1969), the most well-known being their 1964 paper in the journal *Word* (Lisker and Abramson, 1964). This paper introduced the acoustic measure of voice onset time (VOT) to describe the nature of stop consonant voicing distinctions. Their data showed that for many languages, VOT effectively separates the voicing categories in production. Subsequent work showed that VOT is an effective perceptual cue for voicing distinctions as well. VOT has become a very widely used measure of stop consonant voicing, and this seminal paper was recognized in a special session, “Forty Years of VOT,” at the ASA’s 147th meeting in New York in 2004. This session, which included both invited and contributed submissions, showed how researchers con-

tinue to employ VOT to study aspects of speech production and perception across languages and in healthy speakers, clinical populations (persons with motor speech disorders and hearing impairment), multilingual speakers, and children. A recent paper (Abramson and Whalen, 2017) provided a retrospective assessment of VOT definitions, measurement criteria, and cross-linguistic use, and a special issue is forthcoming in the *Journal of Phonetics* dedicated to contemporary research using VOT.

Until the end of his life, Arthur also continued to study aspects of Thai (e.g., Tingsabadh and Abramson, 1993) along with minority dialects of Southeast Asian languages, with a particular focus on laryngeal distinctions of tone and voice quality. In 2013, at the age of 88, Arthur gave a paper on voice registers in Mon languages at the 166th meeting of the ASA in San Francisco.

Arthur remained active at Haskins Laboratories until shortly before his death. He is remembered as an assiduous scientist, a generous and committed colleague and mentor, and a true mensch.

#### ***Selected References by Arthur S. Abramson***

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