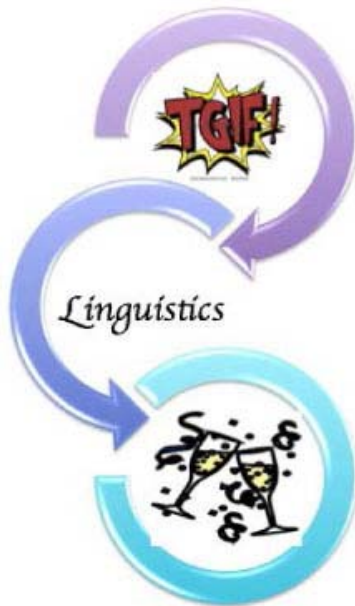


# TGIF: The NTU Linguist Chatroom



**Join us!**  
**Friday 27 March 2015, 10.30am**  
**@ S3-SR6 (S3-B3B-42)**

## Speaker

**Tan Ying Ying** is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She works on issues related to socio-phonetics, World Englishes, language planning and policy, and sociolinguistics. Her work has appeared in top-tier journals such as the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *World Englishes*, *English World-Wide*, *Interventions: Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, and *Social Identities*. In 2013-14, she was Fung Global Fellow at Princeton University, which supported her research project entitled "Contesting Language Policies". The project combines ethnographic work with analyses of how language policies worked in practice in order to examine how multilingual environments like Singapore have dealt with problems of linguistic fragmentation over time. Her book manuscript, *Illegitimate Tongues*, based on that project, is currently in preparation.

## Stressed about stress?: Rethinking stress in World Englishes

Many speakers of postcolonial Englishes exhibit anxieties about their own varieties of English, and are often concerned about the perceived "correctness" of their English language usage. One feature of speech that speakers and language pedagogists seem to be stressed about is *stress*. In the case of Singapore, for instance, scholars have noted how Singapore English exhibits different stress placement patterns as compared to British or American English. Much work has also been done to suggest that such "deviations" of stress placement patterns from the supposed "native" British or American norms create problems for intelligibility. Yet intelligibility is a perceptual issue, and one knows from a large body of phonetic research that to hear or listen to stress is not a straightforward affair as the perception of stress is dependent on a set of acoustic properties. This leads us to the central question of this paper: what criteria do speakers use when listening to stress, especially in a different variety of English?

This paper presents the results of a recently completed study comparing speakers of different Englishes – Singaporean, British, American and Australian – on their perception of stress. This paper will show, from the analyses of a perception test, that stress is perceived differently between speakers of different Englishes. Acoustic measurements of the speech stimuli data will explain how the differences in stress perception come about. The results of this study throw into question our understanding of stress in World Englishes. More importantly, this study suggests that prosodic differences need to be embraced without the preconceived, traditional notions of "nativeness".

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