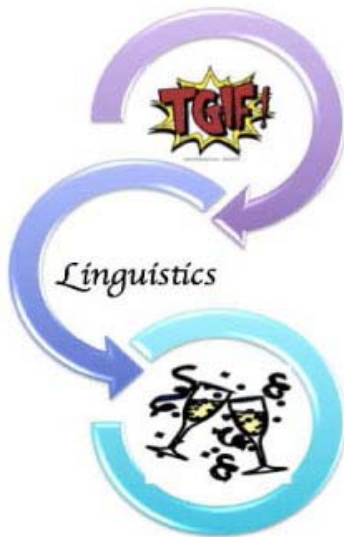


# TGIF: The NTU Linguist Chatroom

**Join us!**  
**Friday, 29 January 2016, 2.30pm**  
**@ HSS Conference Room (HSS-05-57)**



## Mind the language gap: It starts early

For many decades the general consensus both among experts of language and the general public was that, granted typically developing cognitive abilities and a linguistic environment involving adults speaking to the child daily, children would develop language skills consistently and uniformly.

This view, however, began to shift in the 1990s when it became apparent that a child's early language environment is critical to his or her life-course trajectory. Indeed, cascading effects starting early in infancy can percolate from general learning abilities to educational attainment via language. Thus, understanding basic mechanisms and environmental conditions affecting learning deserves appropriate attention and research.

If linguistic development is impacted so clearly in monolingual settings one may expect even larger individual differences when children grow up in mixed multilingual environments such as Singapore. One real possibility is thus that large differences in linguistic skills emerge very early on during infancy and early childhood, and persist throughout the life of an individual.

Just as not every child develops language in the same way, there are large individual differences in the way parents and caregivers talk to their children. Who does it better? Can we establish how socio-economic and contextual factors such as bilingualism affect both parental speech and language development trajectories? How can parents communicate more effectively to scaffold their children's bilingual development? Here I offer an overview of a project started at NTU aimed at answering the above questions. I also sketch a follow-up project to create the first parent-implemented language intervention program based in Singapore for babies and toddlers.

## Speaker



Luca Onnis received his PhD in Psychology in 2004 from the University of Warwick. He was later a postdoctoral research associate at Cornell University from 2004 to 2008. He was Assistant and then Associate professor at the University of Hawaii from 2008 to 2013. He joined the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies at NTU in late 2013, and founded the LEAP lab. His research focuses on understanding basic mechanisms of language learning in both children and adults.

The TGIF seminar series is organised by  
 the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies, HSS

