



TGIF: The NTU Linguist Chatroom



**Join us! Friday, 21 October 2016, 3.30pm
@ HSS Conference Room (HSS-05-57)**

What the little languages of Northeast India can teach us about linguistic diversity

Northeast India is a biological, cultural and linguistic hotspot at the western extreme of Southeast Asia and home to possibly 200-300 languages belonging to four distinct genetic stocks: Austroasiatic, Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan and Tai-Kadai. Despite the astonishing richness of the region's linguistic diversity, it is still the case that overall very little work has been done on the majority of these languages (primarily due to historical/political reasons), and so they are yet to reveal all of their fascinating secrets. In my talk I will give an overview of the more unusual features that have been encountered in fieldwork-based research on the Tibeto-Burman languages of the region, and I will demonstrate just how important minority languages are to the discipline – both for confronting linguistic theory, and for enriching our understanding of the pathways by which grammatical complexity develops.

Speaker



Alexander (Alec) Coupe is an Associate Professor in the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies, an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow, and co-editor of *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area*. For the past two decades his research has focused on the recording, analysis and documentation of the languages of Northeast India; more recently he has begun collaborations with minority language communities to develop orthographies, children's reading books and dictionaries that will help to maintain their languages in an increasingly globalized world. As a field linguist he has interests in phonetics, phonology, tone systems, morphology, morphosyntax, syntactic structure, pragmatics and semantics, and he has published research in all of these fields. His work collectively feeds a higher interest: to better appreciate the extent of diversity in human languages, and how this can inform linguistic theory.

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

