



TGIF: The NTU Linguist Chatroom

**Join us! Friday, 9 September 2016, 3.30pm
@ HSS Conference Room (HSS-05-57)**

Profiling languages in SG100

With active language planning policies in force since its independence as a nation, the linguistic situation in Singapore has undergone dramatic changes in its 50 years of history. A number of linguistic issues have arisen as a result of these policies. These include a rapid shift in the languages used by Singaporeans to English only and the demise of the Chinese vernaculars.

This presentation tracks the changing repertoire of Singaporeans across the three main ethnic groups over the last 50 years and makes projections of language needs and practices in the decades to come. The presentation will describe the language policies, planning and implementation in Singapore and discuss the impact of such policies. Reference is made to ongoing research on the attitudes and use of the varieties of English; on the maintenance and shift of the non-English official languages of Singapore; and the marginalization of elderly Chinese Singaporeans. This presentation draws data from three separate studies. The attitudinal data from an ongoing subjective-reaction study of Singaporeans from different socio-economic background using the Match-Guise technique; while the investigation of the non-English varieties was carried out using in-depth interviews and the statistical analysis of data obtained through questionnaires.

The results show a marginalization of elderly Chinese Singaporeans who do not speak English or Mandarin. The results also show that the Chinese vernaculars have almost all disappeared, with Mandarin becoming the de-facto mother tongue of the Chinese community. For Singaporean Malays the Malay language is still unrivaled in interactions with senior members of the community. However, English is making inroads everywhere else and this is particularly significant for young Malay adults (18-24 years), young women and people of high socio-economic and educational status. This leads to the conclusion that domains that were traditionally considered safe havens for Malay in Singapore are slowly being eroded.

All these studies indicate a linguistically dynamic community that is very sensitive to government-led initiatives and globalization forces.

Speaker



Francesco CAVALLARO is an Associate Professor in the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has worked at various Universities in Australia and he is now living and working in Singapore. His research interests are in sociolinguistics and the social aspects of bilingualism, especially of minority groups in multilingual contexts. He has published on language maintenance and shift, the demographics of the Italian community in Australia, language attitudes in Singapore and on the use of technology in the classroom. He is the author of the book *Transgenerational language shift: From Sicilian and Italian to Australian English*, published in 2010 by The Italian Australian Institute, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. His main research focus is the survival of minority languages and the factors that influence both language maintenance and shift.

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

