



TGIF 4: The NTU Linguist Chat Room Seminars

9 September (Francesco Cavallaro)

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. 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.

23 September (Denis Burnham)

Reading is an Unnatural Act, and it begins at Birth: The Role of Speech Perception in Literacy Development

Human speech has humble beginnings: in phylogeny it evolved to take advantage of our auditory and articulatory hardware; in ontogeny infant speech perception is based on auditory reactions to acoustic features, but soon becomes linguistically tuned to the features of the ambient speech input. Reading and writing are much more recent developments with little or no phylogenetic history, but they too have humble ontogenetic origins – the seeds of literacy lie in the tuning of infants' speech perception to the ambient language environment.

In this talk I will present experiments showing the intimate relationship between auditory and auditory-visual speech perception, speech input to the infant, perceptual attunement to the ambient language, and reading, with a dash of dyslexia for added spice.

7 October (Alice Chan)

Language, cognition, culture, and the brain

The inter-relationship between different functions of the brain has been studied extensively in the past decades. The talk will focus on discussing the interactivity of language and cognition in the encultured brains.

21 October (Alexander Coupe)

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

Northeast India is a region that forms a buffer zone between two overlapping linguistic areas of Asia. In this talk I will discuss some of the interesting features of Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in Northeast India, how they demonstrate the areal influences of both South and Southeast Asia, and what they can teach us about the extremes of linguistic diversity.

4 November (Werner Botha)

English-Chinese code-switching among university students in southern China

This talk discusses the language practices of young people in a particular social network in Macau, southern China. By using an adapted version of Milroy's (1980) social network research methodology, I draw on data captured through recorded conversations and online and phone/text communications by members of the social network. These interactions are discussed with reference to such social dimensions of network interaction, affect, and topic of conversation. I will also review possible approaches for operationalising research on 'translanguaging space' in bi- or multilingual contexts.

