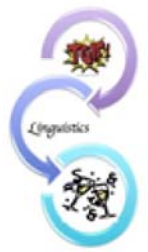


TGIF: The NTU Linguist Chatroom



**Join us! Friday, 10 March 2017, 3.30pm
@ HSS Conference Room (HSS-05-57)**

Abui native healthcare concepts in the context of modern medicine

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Malaria is a constant health threat to about three billion people worldwide, the majority of whom live in South and Southeast Asia. This presentation reports the first results of a collaboration between public health experts (Oxon, London School of Tropical Medicine, and Eijkman Institute for Molecular Biology), linguists (NTU), and ethnobotanists (U of Hawaii) targeting the Abui community of Eastern Indonesia. Because a general concept of 'malaria' is not established in the Abui language, we combined several linguistic approaches to arrive at a symptom-based native classification of this disease and created an inventory of traditional health-protecting practices and medical plants, independently verified our ethnobotanists.

The conclusion is that knowledge pertaining to malaria, although fragmented, is far better communicated in the native language, where it forms a coherent conceptual system. In general, Abui native conceptualisation of malaria refers to magic causes of malaria, e.g. cerebral malaria (*takaya*) is seen as a 'punishment' for immoral acts, whose correct identification is seen to be essential to its successful treatment. Interviews conducted in Indonesian, the national language, yield much less knowledge of the traditional knowledge. This may be caused by the perception of the traditional knowledge to be in conflict with the dominant monotheistic religions and the 'modernity' symbolized by the national language.

Speaker



FRANTIŠEK KRATOCHVÍL obtained his PhD from Leiden University, specialising in the description and documentation of Papuan and Austronesian languages of Indonesia. He held positions at the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology (Australia) and Hong Kong Baptist University before joining the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies at NTU. František's work is primarily descriptive, combining structural, computational and structural approaches to language to formulate and address questions of language relationships, contact, and language-cognition interaction, such as event conceptualisation, deixis, and metaphor.

