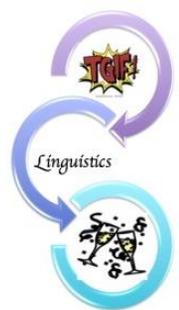


TGIF:

The NTU Linguist Chatroom

co-hosted by the SoH Interlingual and Intercultural Studies
Interdisciplinary Research Cluster



**Join us! Friday, 24 August 2018, 3.30pm
@ HSS Seminar Room 4 (HSS-SEM-RM4)**

Arguments for Seeing Theme-Rheme and Topic-Comment as Separate Functional Structures

This paper presents the concepts of theme-rheme as discussed by the early Prague School and by Michael Halliday, and then, using the facts of Tagalog, argues that, unlike these two approaches, which conflate topic-comment and theme-rheme because all of the languages they looked at happened to have this configuration, we should expand the typology to allow for languages where topic (what the clause is about) and theme (defined as the speaker's starting point) are not conflated. The latter is important because of the phenomenon known as "projection", and it is also argued that typologists should consider the different mechanisms that speakers of different languages have conventionalized in order to help the addressee project the speaker's intention. The typological variability of access to unmarked topic will also be discussed, using English, Tagalog, and Chinese as examples.

Speakers



Randy J. LaPolla received his PhD in Linguistics from the University of California, Berkeley. He joined NTU as Professor of Linguistics in 2012. He also has a courtesy appointment as Professor of Chinese. Before joining NTU he was Chair (Professor) of Linguistics at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia (2004-2012). He was also Director of the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology at La Trobe 2008-2010. Before moving to Australia he worked at the Academia Sinica (1990-1998) and City University of Hong Kong (1996-2004). He was selected by the Ministry of Education of the PRC to be a Cheung Kong Scholar 2005-2008, and he was elected Fellow of the Australian Academy for the Humanities in 2008, and President of the Australian Linguistic Society for 2007-2009. He was elected Honorary Member of the Philippine Linguistics Society in 2008, and Lifetime Member (Eminent Scholarship) of the Singapore Association for Applied Linguistics in 2016. His research focuses on the history and typology of Sino-Tibetan and Austronesian languages and issues related to the nature of communicative behavior and functional explanations for the patterns found in languages.

