



TGIF 8 (Sem1, AY2018-19): The NTU Linguist Chat Room Seminars

August 24 - Randy LaPolla

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.

September 21 - Guinevere Barlow

English in Irish Writing

This presentation offers a sociolinguistic analysis of English in Irish-language literature and aligns its findings with recent research into spoken code-mixing. Code-mixing has been widely studied in spoken data yet research into contemporary literary forms remains limited. This study determines if the universal functions identified in spoken code-mixing are evinced in literary form.

October 19 - Geoffrey Benjamin

Some distinctive features of hunter-gatherer musics?

In several parts of Southeast Asia, the nomadic hunting and gathering populations display musical performance structures that differ in significant ways from those of their more sedentary neighbours, even in cases where they otherwise share the same melodic motifs. In particular, the nomadic populations favour highly heterophonic and/or starkly non-melismatic singing that contrasts with the more homophonic and decorated styles preferred in the sedentary populations. Cultural and social reasons for these differences will be proposed, with illustrations taken from field recordings made in various parts of the Malay World, both inland and maritime. The question will also be raised whether similar features characterise nomadic hunter-gatherer musics from other parts of the world.

November 9 - Ivan Panović

Who's the boss? - singing in the 'white dialect'

In this talk, I will gossip a bit about an alleged serial sexual offender, play some of his music, and, most importantly, discuss the linguistic and semiotic strategies he has adopted in his songs so as to become an Arabic pop superstar.

