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CONFERMENT OF SAAL HONORARY MEMBERSHIP



Leader, Mentor and Role Model – SAAL Citation

Dr Ho Wah Kam, SAAL Adviser, has been conferred SAAL's first Honorary Membership in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the association. The conferment took place during SAAL's Annual General Meeting on 6 September 2008. Witnessed by the SAAL Exco and other members of the association, Associate Professor Anne Pakir, former President of SAAL, handed the award to Dr Ho .

In her speech, Associate Professor Chng Huang Hoon, immediate past President of SAAL, wrote that Dr Ho 'deeply believed that SAAL has a duty to fulfil: not just to enable colleagues in Singapore to engage one another on a professional platform, but also to bring Singapore's relatively small band of linguists and language practitioners to the region and later to the global stage'. He was a key SAAL figure in the hosting of the 13th AILA World Congress of Applied Linguistics in 2002 in Singapore, the first time it was held in South-east Asia.

Dr Ho has also been the prime mover for a series of collaborative work in language teaching between SAAL and the Singapore Teachers' Union (STU) through themed colloquia on the teaching of writing, reading, speech and grammar in multicultural and globalising contexts.

REPORT

**National Language Policy and Shift in Language Choice:
The Malaysian Case**

A SAAL-KGMS-Jamiyah Talk by Professor Datuk Dr Asmah Haji Omar

9 January 2009 at the Jamiyah Business School

The speaker of this talk was University of Malaya's emeritus professor of Malay linguistics, Professor Datuk Dr Asmah Haji Omar. The talk started at 5.10pm and lasted for an hour. It certainly attracted a good following among SAAL members, Malay teachers, academics and language activists as the hall at the Jamiyah Business School was almost filled.

Professor Asmah explained the role of Malaysia's language policy as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federation of Malaysia, which states that Malay is the national language in Article 152 (1), known as the National Language Act, and that for official purposes the national language overrides all other languages. However, although it is the main medium of education, Malay is nevertheless not the sole medium of instruction in Malaysia's education system. This complex Malaysian linguistic landscape was carefully explained in her talk. She elaborated that, in various aspects of life, Malaysian ethnic communities are free to use their own ethnic languages for purposes other than the official one, and 'other than official purposes' includes education. Until 1970 the education system was one with the English school as the major component 'accompanied' by a minor one consisting of three vernacular types of school (Malay, Chinese and Tamil). Officially these schools were known as belonging to two streams: the English and the vernacular streams.

In 1970, there was a major change in the streaming which is extant to this day. While the framework of having two streams has been left intact, they differ in their membership, hence the birth of the national stream and the national-type stream within the schooling system in Malaysia. The former consists of national schools which use Malay as the sole medium of instruction, while the latter bear the ethos of the communities in the use of their ethnic languages. The national-type stream is featured by two subtypes: the national-type Chinese school, and the national-type Tamil school.

The English school was phased out to make way for the national school. It was easier to do this with the English school since English is a neutral language as

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far as the ethnic communities are concerned. Hence no racial sensitivity was evoked, only that its termination had brought to a close a chapter in the Malaysian education system which could have given Malaysia an advantage in the pursuit of knowledge, especially in science and technology. However the importance of English within the education system of Malaysia was always at the background and now is again at the forefront of debate in Malaysia.

The difference between the national and national-type school lies in the main medium of instruction, not in the contents of the curriculum. In the national school, the main medium is Malay, while in the national-type it is the language of the community, Chinese or Tamil, with the Malay language as a compulsory subject. In all the schools, English is also taught as a compulsory language as English is defined as the 'second most important language' after the national language. The speaker discussed in detail the different opinions in the divide between the proponents of a single stream and those who want to maintain the status quo. Some of the key issues raised by the pro-mother tongue groups include the merits of cognitive development and language processing, where it is better to teach content knowledge in one's mother tongue. On the other hand, the national language proponents believe in issues of language and culture, where the sole use of the national language can help foster unity. A way out of this deadlock was attempted by the implementation of the Vision school where schools from both streams share the same compound so that students have bigger common space to interact, especially in the sports field and canteens, and in other shared facilities.

In December 2003, the government announced a change in language allocation in school instruction such that from the beginning of the school year 2004, Mathematics and Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics) were to be taught in English from the primary level right through to the university. The audience was given a detailed elaboration of the step-by-step implementation of this policy and the reactions of the various ethnic groups, professionals, academics and the man-in-the-street to the current issues of language and education in Malaysia. What is evident from the talk is that the current issues facing the Malaysian language and education scene are still manifold, but there is now a clearer and more honest debate on this age-old issue medium of instruction in the education system.

The talk concluded with a sumptuous spread of refreshments provided by KGMS. It was indeed a good time for the participants to interact amongst themselves, with the speaker and with SAAL members.

Lim Beng Soon
Uni-SIM

In Memoriam

The late Associate Professor (Dr) Teoh Boon Seong, a former SAAL exco member and a recognised scholar in the field of Malay and applied linguistics, passed away peacefully on 18 November 2008 after a brief battle with cancer.

The late Associate Professor Teoh had an illustrious academic career in both Malaysia and Singapore. He started his career in academia at the Malay Language Division of the Faculty of Humanities at Universiti Sains Malaysia after obtaining a PhD from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. His talent in the field brought him to Singapore, where he was appointed Senior Lecturer at the Department of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore in 1994. He held this post until he was appointed Associate Professor at the Faculty of Communications, Singapore Management University in 2000. Amongst his publications are key works in the area of Malay Phonology books published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (The Malaysian Language Agency). He wrote a seminal publication entitled 'The Sound System of Malay Revisited', published in 1994 by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, and in 2006 co-authored a key text on autosegmental phonology and its application to Malay. He also contributed many journal articles in the fields of Malay phonology, applied linguistics, translation and Penang Peranakan Hokkien.

To many SAAL old-timers, Boon Seong, as he was affectionately known, will be for ever remembered as a happy and jolly fellow who would spare the time to eat with and listen to the problems of his friends and to provide sound advice. He will be sadly missed but certainly not forgotten by his colleagues and friends at SAAL.

Lim Beng Soon
Uni-SiM

CONFERENCES
Prescriptivism and patriotism: from nationalism to globalisation

17–19 August, 2009, New College, University of Toronto, Canada

Concept

This international bilingual conference centres on the historical and contemporary links between linguistic prescriptivism and political patriotism. Two research questions inform it. What roles have domestic politics,

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globalisation, or transnational migration patterns played in the emergence of linguistic varieties like Standard English, Scots, Singlish, International French, chiac, English and French creoles? And to what extent have these varieties been shaped by prescriptive attitudes and instruments like dictionaries?

The conference theme of linguistic prescriptivism – the idea that one language or dialect is better than another and ought to be the norm for the whole speech community – has strong but not straightforward connections with politics, both domestic and international. In a global context, local languages and local varieties of international languages have risen in both overt and covert prestige as expressions of identity, especially after a former colony's independence. Yet international Englishes remain useful economic tools and retain prestige. In such settings as Singapore, the media's use of Singlish and the government's promotion of Good English are in conflict as models of national identity. Moreover, while similar tensions between local and global models of identity and legitimacy pervade la francophonie, the particularity of its linguistic politics can be illustrated by contrasting Quebec with the minority communities in the rest of Canada. Finally, the role of the media in establishing language norms raises the broader question of the instruments of prescription and the social authority of their agents. Prescriptivism is often associated with such top-down mechanisms as government policies, language academies and schools.

For more information, contact:

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The role of language and multi-cultural education in educating local communities in global economies: perspectives from Asia

The International Work-related Education Conference

7–8 April 2009, La Thanh Hotel, Hanoi, Vietnam

Concept

The global knowledge-based economy produces profound challenges to work-related education at every level. While these challenges manifest themselves in uniquely local ways at specific local sites, they are produced, and must be addressed, in contexts that are uncompromisingly global. If work-related

education is to contribute to positive outcomes for people and for local communities, we (workers, corporations, educators, researchers, policy makers, politicians and international organisations) must find new ways to pay attention to the ways in which a workforce in the knowledge-based economy can be understood to be 'global' as well as 'local', and what workers need to be able to know and be able to do to move across and within these spatial and temporal domains.

Clearly, all aspects of education and training, including language and multicultural education, are being recruited to support and develop a knowledge-based economy. What educators, employers and policy makers at national, regional and international levels need to do now is to cast a critical eye over the past and to consider, with far greater clarity than we have managed in the past, what role work-related education should play in the future. As part of those deliberations we need to consider who work-related education is intended to benefit and what kinds of knowledge-based economies it should be helping to build. Language and multicultural education plays an essential part in those deliberations.

Being an international language, English has played an important role in educating the global workforce. This conference aims, in particular, to understand the use and ownership of English by different players in the workplace, and the ways in which English has both been a facilitating and colonising means in workplace education at national, regional and global levels. Taking a critical look at these issues in itself responds to ethical concerns that the conference also targets to address. One of the ethical concerns related to the role of English in educating the global workforce relates to the diminishing role of other languages and associated cultures and practices which are at risk due to the dominant status of English. For local communities to be 'global' as well as 'local', work-related education must acknowledge and promote the important role of education conducted in local and other foreign languages. Multicultural education also needs to be given more emphasis and made more explicit in educational policies.

This conference wishes to bring together the voices of researchers, educators, policy makers, international organisations, enterprises and corporations operating in Asia on various aspects of work-related education in educating local communities in global economies. These aspects include what is involved and what is at stake when global corporations, NGOs, national education systems and local communities attempt to educate individuals and workforces to engage in the global economy. We are particularly interested in identifying and understanding the role of multicultural education, English, local languages

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and other foreign languages in the education of a global workforce and the ethical issues involved in educating a global workforce for the global economy from the perspectives of the Global South, starting with Asia as the initial site for this conference.

Conference Themes

The conference will focus on, but not be limited to, the following themes:

1. The role of English as an international language in educating the global workforce
2. The role of local languages and other foreign languages
3. The role of multicultural education
4. Educating local communities for global economies: perspectives from corporations, enterprises, NGOs and policy makers
5. Ethical concerns in educating local communities and the global workforce
6. Others

Sponsors

- Monash University International Strategic Initiatives, Monash University, Australia,
- The Institute for the Study and Development of Language and Culture, Vietnam Society of Linguistics, & Faculty of English and Modern Languages, Hanoi Open University, Vietnam

Conference chairs and convenors

Dr Phan Le Ha
Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia

Associate Professor Phan Van Que
Vice President, Hanoi Open University

Dr Duong Ky Duc
Vice President, Institute for the Study and Development of Language and Culture, Vietnam Society of Linguistics

For more information, contact:

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**English changing:
Implications for policy, teaching, and research**

The 14th English in South East Asia (ESEA) Conference

26–28 November 2009, the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

Concept

Educators today face the challenge of teaching learners who need different Englishes for diverse purposes – all while English and its uses are themselves also changing. These changes raise new questions for policy, teaching, and research. How should governments and educational systems respond? In what ways should classrooms change? What kinds of research are needed given these new realities? The 14th ESEA conference aims to provide a venue for the discussion of these issues from a variety of perspectives and for stimulating new work in these areas.

Discussion Topics

Policy

- The relationship of English and other languages in education, workplace, and society
- The systems for language education and the improvement of their capacities
- The way research and teaching informs policy

Teaching

- The practice of teaching in the light of new Englishes and various contexts of use
- The materials, media and curricula appropriate for teaching and learning
- The transformation of teacher education and development

Research

- The challenges presented by the South East Asian context to received knowledge about language teaching
- The applicability of different research paradigms for investigating various issues in English language teaching

- The connections between different strands of research in English language teaching

For more information, contact:

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A Bibliography of Singapore Child Language

(Updated December 2008)

Madalena Cruz-Ferreira (Editor)

Independent Scholar

The Singapore Child Language bibliography spans three decades of research on monolingual and multilingual English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil as used in Singapore, by and to typically and atypically developing children, at home or elsewhere. It includes research on educational and pedagogical issues related to child multilingualism in Singapore, as well as on developmental norming and remediation. The current yearly update (December 2008) brings the total number of entries in the bibliography to 373.

The present scope of the bibliography stems from several limitations. Self-imposed limitations concern, for example, the omission of references, whether published or academic research pieces, whose titles I found vague and whose abstracts are unavailable to resolve this vagueness, and the inclusion of studies dealing with the language used to the child, on my assumption that analyses of child language can only make sense with clear information about linguistic targets surrounding the child. One more inherent limitation concerns my illiteracy in three of the four languages used in Singapore, which explains the near-absence of references written in Chinese, Malay and Tamil.

The long-term goal of this bibliographical database is to provide a regularly updated source of information on child language research in the broader South-East Asian region, preferably in different languages. It is my hope that researchers in child language, in Singapore as elsewhere in the SE Asian region, will want to come back to me with amendments, information and suggestions which may turn this bibliography into a research tool that can truly serve its users.

A searchable version of the bibliography is included in the CHILDES overall bibliography, available online from <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/bibs/>. This version is in EndNote format, and it includes abstracts and URLs where further bibliographic information can be sought. The Keyword field of all entries in EndNote contains the word ‘Singapore’.

Putting together a usable bibliography is not a one-person assignment. Several colleagues generously contributed contacts and details on their own research, as well as their time. I should also acknowledge the help I got from the SCLSIG (Singapore Child Language Special Interest Group, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sclsig/>) and the unfailing support from the *SAAL Quarterly*'s editors and webmaster. Thank you for making this undertaking possible.

In the following pages, research published and undertaken in 2008 up to the present is presented. The *most updated* bibliography of Singapore Child Language in Singapore can be found here: <http://www.saal.org.sg/sigs.html>

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Positions in the Writing Programme
National University of Singapore

We invite applications for non-tenure track positions as Lecturers or above in a writing programme within a residential learning environment at the new University Town, National University of Singapore. We are looking for colleagues who can help to (1) design the writing programme, (2) integrate it into University Town's residential learning environment, and (3) develop and teach topic-specific interdisciplinary writing modules.

The normal teaching load will be 3/3 with each writing class normally capped at 15 students. Appointees should hold a PhD or an MA degree. PhD appointees are expected to have research interests and may be asked to take on supervisory duties. Remuneration and benefits are competitive with similar positions and are amplified by Singapore's relatively low tax rates.

We are looking for candidates who can begin in January 2010 or sooner to set up the writing programme and teach classes when the first phase of University Town project opens in 2011. However, we will continue to recruit new members of staff in the future as subsequent phases of the project are completed. The current positions will remain open until filled, but review will begin on 30 March 2009.

Interested applicants should submit their applications with a cover letter; a CV; and a statement of the principles that underlie their teaching. Applicants will be asked to provide letters of recommendation, samples of writing lessons, etc. if they are shortlisted. Please send applications via email to uspbox23@nus.edu.sg or by mail to:

Director, University Scholars Programme
National University of Singapore
10 Kent Ridge Crescent
Singapore 119260

Currently one of the top universities in the Asia Pacific region, the National University of Singapore (NUS) enrolls about 24,000 undergraduate and 9,000 graduate students in 14 faculties and schools. The University Town residential learning environment is designed to facilitate independent and critical thinking, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and learning, cross-cultural communication and international experiences that will help build a global learning community with a strong sense of identity and belonging to NUS. It

will also offer the cosmopolitan mix of some 6,000 students more avenues for student leadership and entrepreneurship.

For further information about the National University of Singapore, see <http://www.nus.edu.sg>

For University Town, see <http://www.nus.edu.sg/utown/index.htm>

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