



MICA (P) 225/10/2009
No. 88 November 2009

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NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

MULTILINGUAL, GLOBALIZING ASIA
Implications for policy and education

AILA Review

Volume 22 (John Benjamins Publishing Company)

Edited by Lisa Lim and Ee-Ling Low
University of Hong Kong / National Institute of Education,
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore



This special issue, which involves work by SAAL members, has Asia as its focus, springboarding primarily from the multilingual reality that defines South and Southeast Asia, but also including the regions of East Asia normally considered more monolingual. The collection of articles addresses the tensions involved in how the countries position the English language even as they maintain and manage their own endogenous language(s), critically

considering issues concerning plurilingual practices long existing in the region, the consequences of post independence official language and medium of instruction choices, as well as the situation of minority communities who tend to fall out of official consideration, highlighting the interesting disjuncts between official discourse and community practice that often exist, and the implications that thus arise, particularly for policy and education. While English holds great import as a former colonial language and/or a most valuable commodity in this age of globalization, it also becomes evident that, particularly in East and Southeast Asia, Mandarin may indeed be another force to be reckoned with.

Adapted from:

http://www.benjamins.com/cgi-bin/t_bookview.cgi?bookid=AILA%2022

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ABSTRACTS

Beyond fear and loathing in SG: The real mother tongues and language policies in multilingual Singapore

Lisa Lim, *University of Hong Kong*

This paper considers the real mother tongues of Singapore, namely the Chinese ‘dialects’ and Singlish, the linguistic varieties which, respectively, arrived with the original immigrants to the rapidly developing British colony, and evolved in the dynamic multilingual ecology over the decades. Curiously these mother tongues have been regarded with fear and treated with loathing in the official language policies and accompanying prestige planning that have been developed and executed in Singapore since independence, being actively denigrated and discouraged in official discourse, viewed as not having a place in the globalization goals of the nation. Looking beyond the official line and census figures, actual linguistic practices of the community of speakers testify to the vitality of these varieties, in spite of the official sanctions; moreover, in spite of itself, the government does in fact allow itself the use of these mother tongues when certain contexts call for it. This paper suggests that an enlightened consideration of native ‘dialects’ and nativized Singlish and the plurilingual practices in which they are used, as well as of the question of intelligibility, must point policy makers in directions where fears are assuaged and spaces made for the natural existence and evolution of such varieties in multilingual ecologies.

Not plain sailing: Malaysia’s language choice in policy and education

Azirah Hashim, *University of Malaya*

This paper focuses on language and education issues in Malaysia as they have unfolded in the context of nation building, societal multilingualism and globalization from independence to the present day. The paper first examines the origin and nature of language and medium-of-instruction policies in Malaysia and the rationale for them. Secondly, it discusses the conflicts and controversies pertaining to language and education analyzing the domains of contestation. The next part of the paper reflects on the various shifts in language policy over the decades, from the early institutionalization of Malay to the growing importance of English amidst globalization trends, and finally the recent shift back to Malay, also examining the positioning of the Chinese and Tamil languages in the

country. This is followed by a discussion of the emergence of an indigenized variety of English and English as a lingua franca in the region. The paper ends with a critical evaluation of the impact of the language and medium-of-instruction policies, and the constraints of alternative policies, with suggestions for a possible way forward.

The plurilingual tradition and the English language in South Asia

A. Suresh Canagarajah, *Pennsylvania State University*

There has been a plurilingual tradition of communication in South Asia since precolonial times. Local scholars consider plurilingualism as ‘natural’ to the ecology of this region. In plurilingualism, proficiency in languages is not conceptualized individually, with separate competencies developed for each language. The different languages constitute an integrated system to constitute a repertoire. After distinguishing plurilingualism from other forms of multilingual communication, the article shows how English has been accommodated in this tradition. What I label Plurilingual English is not an identifiable code or a systematized variety of English. It is a highly fluid and variable form of language practice. Speakers negotiate their different Englishes for intelligibility and effective communication. The article goes on to define plurilingual competence. For communication to work across such radical differences, it is important that acquisition and use go hand and hand. Such a competence is always in a state of becoming and, therefore, acquisition is emergent. Plurilingual communication works because competence does not rely solely on a form of knowledge, but rather, encompasses interaction strategies. In the final section, the article discusses how learner strategy training and language awareness go some way toward facilitating such interactional strategies and repertoire development.

English in China: Convergence and divergence in policy and practice

Anwei Feng, *Bangor University, UK*

This paper starts with an overview of the sociolinguistic context and a series of policy documents concerning English language education promulgated recently in China. It moves on to an analysis of disparities in English language education policies practised in different regions, differences between urban and rural areas, between social classes and between linguistic

minority and majority groups. The juxtaposition aims to reveal what different regions and social and ethnic groups in China have in common and how divergent they can be in terms of local policies and practices in English language provision. Also discussed in the paper are issues such as tensions between the spread of English and Chinese language education, and between mother tongue, Chinese and English language education in the case of minority groups, inequality in education and other linguistic, political and cultural dimensions.

RESEARCH REPORT

A study on digression in student expository writing

Deborah Chua

National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University

Adopting a theoretical framework informed by cognitive and socio-cultural views of writing, this thesis sets out to investigate the possible cognitive processes underlying digression in the expository essays of Singapore students, and the extent to which these cognitive processes are socio-culturally shaped. A two-fold methodology constituting textual analysis and semi-structured interviews was employed. A student's essay was first identified for digressive instances with a set of defining criteria in combination with the linguistic tools of theme-rheme analysis and metadiscursive analysis, following which the student who wrote the essay was interviewed. Interview transcripts were analysed with a coding scheme, and coded student responses studied to detect echoes of literacy practices and assumptions from the Singapore schooling culture. Findings indicate that digression can arise from one or more of six cognitive processes, namely, a topic-centric representation of the rhetorical problem, a contrary-view representation of the rhetorical problem, the setting of knowledge-recount goals, inadequacies in the encoding process, the associative development of a topic and the non-activation of reviewing processes during writing. Findings also indicate that five of these cognitive processes seem to be socio-culturally shaped by the pedagogical practices and assumptions familiar to Singapore students. A discussion of these findings in relation to the literature and the education-related discourse in Singapore suggests that digression in the expository essays of Singapore students reflect not only issues to do with antilogos ability, beliefs about writing and the coordination of multiple cognitive acts, but also values implicit in the Singapore literacy context.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

The /r/ in Singapore English

Geraldine Kwek

National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University

In my proposed study, I am to investigate the different variants of /r/ present in Singapore English. My research questions are:

- (i) What are the acoustic features of the following variants of /r/ in Singapore English and in what phonological environments do these appear in Singapore English?
 - labiodental /r/ (as compared to that present in British English)
 - postvocalic /r/ (as compared to that present in American English)
 - trilled /r/ (as that present in the Indian languages and Bahasa Melayu)
 - /r/ and /l/ coalescence (as compared to that present in Chinese speakers)
- (ii) Which forms of Singapore English do these variants appear in and how do Singaporeans and foreigners feel towards the use of these types of /r/?

Although the labiodental /r/ has been widely discussed in British English, it has not been researched extensively in the Singapore context. Only one other small study done by myself and another study by David Deterding (2007), reported in his book *Dialects of English: Singapore English*, have dedicated research to this variant of /r/ in Singapore English. My study will therefore gather more evidence to offer a more reliable description of the presence of the labiodental /r/ in Singapore English.

The postvocalic /r/ has been much talked about in the study of Singapore English. However, most studies have investigated only young adults in Singapore (e.g. Poedjosoedarmo, 2000 and Tengah, 2008). My study aims to include the other age groups to offer a more encompassing and detailed description of the postvocalic /r/ in Singapore English.

The trilled /r/ is another feature that can be easily identified in the speech of certain Singapore English speakers, especially Indian and Malay Singaporeans. A PhD study in progress has found that the trilled /r/ is present in Bruneian English speakers and this seems to be an influence from the Bruneian variety of

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Malay. Since the trilled /r/ in Singapore English has never been studied, my study will cover new ground, describing a feature that has previously been ignored.

The coalescence between /r/ and /l/ has either been dismissed as insignificant by earlier studies (e.g. Poedjosoedarmo, 2000) or merely mentioned as ‘a notorious pair’ by Low & Brown (2005). However, I strongly believe that a more detailed and therefore more reliable description can be done for this variant in my study.

LEADER, MENTOR AND ROLE MODEL **A Tribute to Dr Ho Wah Kam**

PART 3

In this series, SAAL Quarterly will be publishing articles on Dr Ho Wah Kam, SAAL Advisor, which were put together and edited by Assoc. Prof. Chng Huang Hoon and Assoc. Prof. Low Ee Ling, and presented to Dr Ho on his 75th birthday (February 2009) during the SAAL Annual General Meeting on 6 September 2008. In this issue, the third part of the series will feature testimonials from various individuals who have benefited from Dr Ho’s mentorship and friendship, as well as a select list of Dr Ho’s publications generated during his career as an educationist, teacher, and administrator. The selected list was compiled by Zhu Shenfa of the Centre for English Language Communication, NUS.

TESTIMONIALS

by Christianty Nur

I have known Dr Ho for ten years, since I was a postgraduate student at RELC. He has just joined to be one of the Research Associates there. There were only six of us at that time, and all of us came from different countries. When we were writing our dissertations, Dr Ho encouraged us to do our research on something that we were interested in and at the same time to be able to develop it further if we want to do our PhDs later on (in the end, two of them got their PhD/EdD). I remembered that we would sometime feel homesick as we were away from home for quite some time, leaving our families behind. Fortunately, Dr Ho was always ready to listen to all our problems. He always encouraged us to do our best and to make sure that we finished whatever we are doing. As for

me, he has always been like my mentor and encouraging me to do my best. Also, he never forgets to ask about my family. I am really grateful for all his support and I hope that he will continue to give support to those who need it. 'Dr Ho, thank you for everything'.

by Anne Pakir

Dr Ho Wah Kam — Honorary Member of SAAL today, and its Patron, as well as Advisor for many years — is the 'courtly gentleman' who saw SAAL from its birth in 1985 through its scaling of heights especially in recent publications on applied linguistics. Dr Ho was instrumental in shepherding this professional association towards maintaining a twin foci on theoretical considerations and practical applications in the study of linguistics, bridging the gulf between theoreticians and practitioners in the field of language and language education. As co-coordinator of several joint SAAL-STU collaborations, such as the SAAL-STU Colloquia, several of which resulted in SAAL publications, he was there at the genesis, the execution, and the finalization of those projects. He made possible the seamless cooperation between SAAL for professional input into those Colloquia and STU for the support and participation of professionals in our mutually beneficial language-related projects.

Much of the SAAL bid in 1996 to host the AILA 2002 World Congress of Applied Linguistics in Singapore in order to 'place Singapore on the linguistic map of the world' was inspired by Dr Ho, who went with me and other SAAL exco members to the Jyvaskyla AILA 1996 World Congress where we won the bid. Then, through the long six years of eventual build up to a highly successful Congress in Singapore in 2002, Dr Ho was ever present, with strong advice, physical presence, and actual support of getting a serious publication completed, arising from the AILA 2002 Congress.

Along the years that I've known Dr Ho, he has been such a 'courtly gentleman', whether in our joint publications such as the co-edited volume, *Language, Society and Education in Singapore* (1994, 1998, 2004 editions) and in other research and professional collaborations with overseas partners. I feel honoured to have known him, worked with him, and benefitted from this long association with him.

As President of SAAL from 1990–2004, I had the good fortune of excellent committees, but most of all I truly appreciated the enhancement of these excellent SAAL officers through constant and splendid advice from Dr Ho.

by Qi Fang

The first time I met Dr Ho Wah Kam can be traced back to 1993 at NIE, Singapore where I studied at the PGDELTA programme with 8th batch of the Chinese scholars on Bukit Timah campus. We took the course 'Education in the Context' at the Department of Education, NIE in the second semester. To my memory, Dr Ho gave us two tutorials after lectures by another professor.

It was in 1996 that I returned to Singapore to study at NUS/RELC MA programme in applied linguistics. At the time, Dr Ho had retired from NIE and worked as an adjunct professor at RELC, where he supervised MA students and conducted the research method course partially and focused on quantitative method and statistics in particular. It had been almost ten years since my Singapore studies but some of the best memories still linger in my mind as if it were yesterday.

Here is an excerpt of a memo Dr Ho wrote me when I was struggling with my research proposal. I was impressed by Dr Ho's way of supervising his students, his caring for his students and his expertise.

Dear Qi Fang, 26 Dec. 1997

Thanks for showing me your draft proposal on Boxing Day. I have enjoyed reading it. But I have some problems with it, which I will share with you now. For the minor things, I have marked up your draft to show where the carelessness (quite a bit) is but the more important points are given below.

1. Your title — your sample of 100 undergraduates (probably from one university in China) will not allow you to generalise to "undergraduates in Chinese Universities". You need a qualifier in your title.
2. You have NOT defined your key variables: rhetorical patterns, rhetorical organisation, positive and negative transfers used in your research questions. You should make your research design/questions clearer.
3. I notice you have not yet read recent papers (contrastive rhetoric) from my good friend Prof. Andy Kirkpatrick (Curtin University of Technology), who has published papers on the same topic and who reads and writes Chinese as well.

.....

I hope the comments and critics above will be of some use to you. You should bear some of these points in mind at this stage. Thanks again for showing me the draft.

All the best wishes for the New Year.

Ho

cc: Dr Chris Ward for information.

The above is an excerpt from a memo Dr Ho wrote me. I still treasure these memos wherever I go. They actually carry his insightfulness, concern and caring attitude towards his students, and encouragement which pushed me forward to complete the study. In addition, he invited all MA students to his house for the Chinese New Year party. I cherish all these good memories about my Singapore study for the life. I'd actually pass on what I learned from Dr Ho to extend to my students today.

May I wish Dr Ho health and happiness.

by Shi Zhili

Dr Ho, a Kind and Inspiring Mentor: I got to know Dr Ho Wah Kam in 1998 when I was admitted into the Master of Arts programme by the Regional Language Centre (RELC).

In the first half year of my studies, Dr Ho was my supervisor guiding me in the selection of a topic of my MA thesis. Like many other MA students of applied linguistics, I was ambitious about my thesis as if my research could solve all problems that my students faced in their study of English. After listening carefully to what I wanted to do, Dr Ho said to me, 'So what?' He then pointed out that my plan for the MA thesis was too ambitious to be realistic and expressed his concern over whether I had the time and resources to complete the research. What he enlightened me most was the manageability of a research topic. He reminded me that I must be sure whether I was choosing a topic that was manageable with the available resources. 'Manageable' became a light coming into the long tunnel of choosing a research topic.

Dr Ho was also a very kind mentor, especially to students from China. Ten years ago when I first arrived in Singapore, life for students from China was not as convenient as today. They plunged themselves into a society which was very different from the one that they were used to. Dr Ho made kind efforts to help us get used to the new life here. Festivity promotes homesickness. Chinese New Year is a time when Chinese students miss their families most. Dr Ho was very kind to invite us to his home for a get-together. I was filled with warmth and gratitude for the atmosphere of home and the delicious food that he and his wife prepared. He was also very knowledgeable about the particular culture here. From him I got to know how chicken rice came about, one of the most well-known and also my favourite food.

I am very thankful to Dr Ho for his kind help. I sincerely wish that he will enjoy good health and we will continue to enjoy the privilege of having him as our kind mentor.

by Teng Su Ching

In all the years that I have known and served with Dr Ho in SAAL, he has always been unwavering in his ideals to make SAAL strong in reputation and relevant to the constituents it serves. In his quiet gentle way, he has helped shape SAAL and define its contribution to the applied linguistics community. A true friend of SAAL. Happy Birthday, Dr Ho.

by Ruth Wong

I remember reporting to Dr Ho on the first day of work at NIE in 1986. He sat me down and gave me some advice. That is to be the beginning of a mentor-mentee relationship between us. And, because I am away from my family, Dr and Mrs Ho always regarded me as part of their family.

Dr Ho taught me many things. He was instrumental in my getting the NIE scholarship to do my PhD at the University of Toronto. He believed in developing local staff to strengthen the staff expertise in NIE. Many of us (younger staff at the time) regarded him as a father-figure. In addition to academia, Dr Ho also taught me about life. He modelled the values of being appreciative of our blessings, of being humble, of being fair when making conclusions about others.

The following acrostic poem is a feeble attempt to describe Dr Ho:

H
 M e t I c U l **O** u s

W e l l - R e a d
 e x E m P l **A** r y
H a r d - W o r k I n g

K i n d
 U n **A** s s u M I n g
M o d e L

The person that I am today is due in no small measure to Dr Ho's mentoring. So thank you, Dr Ho, from the bottom of my heart.

by Zhang Meisuo

Dr Ho was my MA mentor in RELC back in 1997 and it was a great fortune for me in my life. I learned, among many other things, useful research methodology from Dr Ho and completed my dissertation smoothly with his close guidance. He was strict and would push me to my limit, and yet helpful and patient. I always received Dr Ho's detailed feedback on my work within the next few days. The feedback with his familiar handwriting is a great treasure to me and I still keep the scripts precious till today.

Dr Ho is a fatherly teacher and has cared for me ever since I got to know him as a student. One small but significant instance of this I still remember clearly. Just before my first Chinese New Year in Singapore, Dr Ho came to our MA room in RELC, gave me a SingTel phone card and said quietly: 'Call your family in China.' I was touched. To help me financially, Dr Ho had his own ways. He would ask me to assist him with some small matters in his Doctorate lectures and then paid me quite decently by his invented 'University' — out of his own pocket to make me feel comfortable. Dr Ho has a place in his heart for me and my family and I am forever grateful.

I was fortunate to have observed once again Dr Ho's true and great scholarship during our STU (Singapore Teachers' Union) visit to Beijing University in 2006. It was a meeting between the STU team, comprising the late Secretary-General

Mr Swithun Lowe, Dr and Mrs Ho and me, and Professors from Beijing University who were literature scholars and leaders in the field in China. Dr Ho is well-known as a linguist and language educator, but what about literature to talk to this group of high calibre? No worry at all. Dr Ho's state-of-the-art knowledge, easy and accurate quote of literary works and insightful comments soon won the respect and admiration of everyone present at the meeting. Dr Ho is a true scholar indeed.

Certain things I learned from Dr Ho are of enduring value and have built in gradually into my character, but I can never hope to reach his level of integrity, kindness, fair-mindedness, dedication to work and intellectual pursuit. I therefore regard Dr Ho as the greatest teacher in my life.

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