

24TH SAAL LECTURE

LANGUAGE AS LOCAL PRACTICE

Abstract

This paper explores the implications for applied linguistics of looking at language as a local practice. This is more than an attempt to understand language use in specific contexts since it questions not only what we mean by language but also what we mean by context. To look at language as a practice is to view language as an activity rather than a structure, as something we do rather than a system we draw on, as a material part of social and cultural life rather than an abstract entity. Language will be examined here in ways that go against some common assumptions about language systems; locality will be explored in its complex manifestations as place; and practice will be viewed in terms of mediated social activity. All three terms will also be explored in conjunction, opening up ways of thinking about the interrelationships among language, place and doing. This has significant implications for applied linguistics, an area of study that has often tended to see language teaching, but not language, as a practice. Viewing language as a local practice has major implications for the ways in which we view languages, literacy, location, and language education.

Speaker

Alastair Pennycook is concerned with how we understand language in relation to globalization, colonial history, identity, popular culture and pedagogy. Recent research has focused particularly on language and localization in hip-hop. Publications include *The cultural politics of English as an international language* (Longman, 1994), *English and the discourses of colonialism* (Routledge, 1998), *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction* (Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001) and *Global Englishes and transcultural flows* (Routledge, 2007), as well as two recent edited books, *Disinventing and reconstituting languages* (with Sinfree Makoni; Multilingual Matters, 2007) and *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language* (with Samy Alim and Awad Ibrahim; Routledge 2008). Alastair is Professor of Language in Education at the University of Technology Sydney.

Chairperson

Assoc Prof Anne Pakir
Department of English Language and Literature, NUS
Advisor, SAAL

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- Jointly hosted by SAAL and ELL/NUS
 - **23 April 2008**
 - **6.15-7.30pm**
 - Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore
 - **Video Room 1, AS5 #02-02 (Blk 5, Level 2)**
 - Please RSVP by emailing to Dr Zhu Shenfa at elczs@nus.edu.sg by **18 April 2008**.
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All are welcome!