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CONTENTS

REPORT SAAL Guest Lecture Neal R. Norrick	2
PLENARY SPEECH: ABSTRACT Beatriz Paredes Lorente	6
A TRIBUTE TO DR HO WAH KAM Fourth in a series	7
THE EVOLUTION OF ELT IN SINGAPORE: Abstracts	11
SAAL Executive Committee Members 2008–2010	15

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REPORT

SAAL Guest Lecture

Conversational Storytelling

Professor Neal R Norrick
Saarland University



Professor Neal R Norrick holds the chair for English Linguistic at Saarland University in Germany. He's interested in the analysis of spoken discourse and over the years has concentrated on conversational storytelling, verbal humour, phraseology and pragmatic markers, as adequately reflected in the titles of his monographs and edited volumes: *Conversational Joking* (1993), *Conversational Narrative* (2000), or most recently with Delia Chiaro, *Humor in Interaction* (2009).

He is currently Special Editions editor for the *Journal of Pragmatics*, a member of the editorial board of *Discourse Processes*, as well as a consulting editor for *Humor*. SAAL, together with the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies (LMS) at NTU, was extremely happy to welcome Professor Norrick as a guest lecturer on 21 July 2009 to provide first-hand insights into his research on conversational storytelling.

Professor Norrick's lecture focused on the structure and function of stories in everyday conversation. As in his research, he exclusively used genuine spoken data for his analysis, some of which are freely available from corpora, such as the Saarbrücken Corpus of Spoken English (SCOSE) or the TalkBank project.

Professor Norrick emphasized the marked status of storytelling as a feature of everyday talk. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) famously showed that talk in interaction is fundamentally organized around the simple, systematic and seemingly automated fact of turn-taking at each possible place of speaker transition. In defining the units of the turn-taking system, Norrick followed Chafe's (1994) notion of intonation unit.

Against the backdrop of these preliminaries, he highlighted that telling a story requires effort and skill, because the teller must be able to hold the floor over several intonation units and transition relevance places. The talk thus focused on the available resources that tellers and listeners use to do so: story openings and closings, as well as different types of response features.

Professor Norrick argued that marking **story openings** is paramount for potential story tellers in everyday conversation to engage their listeners and to achieve active listenership. Active listenership is not a one-way street, but is achieved interactively by all parties involved. Linguistically, this can be achieved in many ways, but tellers often make use of formulaic opening signals, such as guess *what?* or you *won't believe what happened*. The audience in return offers pragmatic markers to signal their involvement, such as backchannels, assessments and expressions of apparent disbelief.

Story closings are produced by using similar formulaic language, because tellers aim at eliciting appropriate responses from their audience. Typical story endings are, for example, *and I lived to tell about it and the rest is history*. Functionally story closings typically "formulate the point, give a summary, or add a coda linking the story to the present context".

Professor Norrick emphasized the importance of effective story closings when he argued that not only the tellers expect appropriate feedback from their performance, but listeners too expect the story to have a meaningful ending. Ideas of appropriateness also became visible in the other aspects of conversational storytelling that he discussed.

Audience response and **co-narration** reflect the influence of the audience onto the structure of the conversational narrative. These are prolonged instances of active listenership, which illustrate that listening is not a passive state, but an active involvement in the storytelling process. Thus, apart from backchannelling to acknowledge attentiveness, listeners often take on roles as secondary story tellers.

4 SAAL Quarterly

Pragmatically, forms of co-narration can be collaborative or antagonistic. Collaborative co-narration is usually a team-performance. Professor Norrick's analysis of his own data illustrated how such collaborative telling often results in overlaps, simultaneous speech or co-telling. He concluded that "in a genuine team performance, the co-tellers subordinate their personal identities to the success of the performance."

The team performance of telling a story can become interactive to an extent that the co-narrator evolves into a co-author. Professor Norrick provided evidence of this form of story telling from conversations between a married couple. However, co-narration is not always supportive. Antagonistic co-narration becomes visible in interruptions, repair work, bantering or teasing, often highlighting individual differences between speakers.

Another mode that illustrates the interactive nature of conversational storytelling involves strategies that tellers "deploy to increase listener response to their performances." Professor Norrick referred to this feature as **modulating responses**. For this purpose he took a closer look at instances in conversation that highlighted how speakers' expectations towards the impact of their stories were not reflected in their audience's reactions. In such situations story tellers employ strategies to repair the audience's dispreferred response. Some of the linguistic resources mentioned and illustrated by Professor Norrick are:

- repetition of crucial parts of the narrative
- increased volume and contrastive stress
- increasing use of a vernacular
- use of discourse markers, e.g. *I mean* or *so* to introduce or preface consequences

Upon termination of a story telling sequence and a possible return to the turn-taking format members of the audience at times respond with a story of their own. These **response stories** were examined next by Professor Norrick. Response stories are usually thematic responses. For example, certain situational contexts are prone to eliciting response stories. Professor Norrick referred to them as global telling contexts: "‘snap shot memory’ stories in response to questions like ‘where were you when the Berlin Wall came down?’ and ‘eulogies’ at birthday parties, roasts, and funerals, built around ‘I knew her when’".

Similar to co-narration, responding to a story can be pragmatically supportive or competitive. Response stories express solidarity by sharing similar experiences or relating to similar themes. However, they are competitive, if they seek to top

the previous teller's punchline or morale. Regardless of their particular pragmatic function though, response stories are again a sign of attentive listenership and the characteristic interactive nature of conversational storytelling.

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Reported by

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CALL FOR PAPERS

CLaSIC 2010

The Fourth CLS International Conference

2–4 December 2010

ClaSIC is a biennial conference, organised by the Centre for English Language Studies, National University of Singapore (NUS). It aims to bring together academics, researchers and professionals from Asia and beyond for a productive and rewarding exchange of insights, experiences, views and perspectives on current and future developments in foreign language teaching and learning. The conference serves as a platform for participants to report on current research and practices in foreign language education and related disciplines. It will also provide an avenue for the discussion and critical examination of new and innovative concepts and approaches expected to have an impact on future practices. Proposal submission deadline is 31 May 2010.

Website: http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/cls/clasic2010/about_Clasic.htm

PLENARY SPEECH

Language in the making of “workers of the world”

Beatriz P. Lorente
SAAL Secretary

Centre for English Language Communication
National University of Singapore

AILA 4th Seminar on Language and Migration
Language, Migration and Labour
4th International Seminar Series

AILA Research Network on Language and Migration
Institute of Multilingualism

University of Fribourg and HEP Fribourg, Switzerland

Date 28–29 January 2010

Abstract

Current studies on language and migration have predominantly viewed the mobility of labour from a destination perspective. As such, research in this area has been primarily concerned with issues related to social integration and inclusion such as immigrant language acquisition, multilingualism and citizenship and language testing citizenship regimes. Little attention seems to have been given to sending countries: to how language may be used in such contexts to produce and/or reproduce global flows of labour and “the larger frames within which such movements are possible, get enabled, get denied, and have effects” (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck, 2005, p. 199). In this paper, I focus on a particular sending country: the Philippines, the world’s largest exporter of government sponsored temporary contract workers. I examine the role of language in the Philippine state’s project of producing skilled and flexible “workers of the world” and the discourses used to legitimize such made-to-order commodification of migrant workers. Furthermore, I also show how the market-driven calibration of the linguistic resources of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) is connected to the mechanisms and the gate-keeping processes the state employs to manage labor migration. In this regard, I look at the following: (1) the promotion of overseas employment by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA); (2) the language and culture orientation programs for first-time household service workers by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA); and (3) the Language Skills Institute of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

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

PART 4

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 fourth and last of the series will feature the epilogue written by Assoc. Prof. Low, as well as bionotes of contributors to the tribute.

EPILOGUE

Low Ee Ling
English Language and Literature Academic Group
National Institute of Education

Reading through the tributes that many have written for Dr Ho Wah Kam in this special volume, three roles stand out clearly in association with Dr Ho the man: “Leader, Mentor & Role Model.” It is for this reason that these roles associated with Dr Ho were selected to be part of the title of this book.

Leader

As a leader, Dr Ho has distinguished himself by being appointed as the first Dean of the School of Education at the National Institute of Education (NIE) Singapore. Today, NIE remains Singapore’s sole teacher-training institute that produces more than 2,000 teachers for Singapore’s schools every year. NIE’s enrolment now stands at close to 3,000 for the three main initial teacher preparation programmes (two-year Diploma in Education, one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Education and four-year Bachelor of Arts/Science (Education) programmes). Another 2,000 — mainly teachers from Singapore schools — are enrolled in the postgraduate Master’s and Doctoral programmes.

NIE has also distinguished itself by offering its programmes beyond Singaporean shores to parts of Asia like Vietnam, Indonesia, China and the Philippines and further afield like the Middle East and Germany, to name a few. The role of Dr Ho, as one of NIE’s pioneering academics and senior

8 *SAAL Quarterly*

administrators, has been pivotal in laying the groundwork for the successful journey of teacher education that NIE has embarked upon both locally and internationally.

Mentor

In his post-retirement years, Dr Ho maintained his role as a teacher educator as seen by his affiliation to two very important establishments associated with teacher education in Singapore: the Regional Language Centre (RELC) and most recently, the Singapore Teachers' Union (STU). In his appointment at RELC, Dr Ho supervised many prominent young scholars from the region as they embarked on their postgraduate studies in Applied Linguistics and Language education. Many of the tributes from his students recorded in his volume are from his RELC days. From their tributes, it is clear that his students are unanimous in endorsing Dr Ho as a kind and inspiring mentor who went the extra mile to shower his students with care and concern especially for those whose families lived far away from Singapore.

Currently, as academic advisor to the Singapore Teachers' Union, Dr Ho's contributions are constantly being featured in STU's newsletter aptly named "The Mentor". Most recently, in my professional dealings with Dr Ho and his role with STU, I know that Dr Ho remains a firm advocate of spreading the importance of quality teacher education to the region and tirelessly tries to engage Singapore to help our neighbours to achieve their vision of achieving a quality teaching workforce through a revamp of their respective teacher education programmes. Two key deliverables from this phase of his career were mentioned by Dr Ho as his 'proudest moments', namely (i) the successful bidding and hosting of the 13th World Congress of Applied Linguistics (AILA 2002) in Singapore which firmly placed Singapore on the world map as a serious contender in Applied Linguistics research; and (ii) the seminal work on 'English Language Teaching in East Asia Today', which he co-edited with Associate Professor Ruth Wong and which showcased the works of promising young scholars from the region, giving their work the voice that they so deserve.

Role Model

Appointments and careers have limited tenures but the influence of a person is for eternity. This holds even more truth if that person has been truly instrumental in helping others to succeed. Dr Ho has, in the span of his life thus far, influenced and inspired many to succeed. More importantly, his is a life that encapsulates the essence of success as succinctly expressed in the words of the New England poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, "To know that even one life

has breathed easier because you have lived — that is to have succeeded.” Dr Ho did much more than that for many of us whose lives he has touched. He has earned the deep respect and admiration of many, exemplifying what it means to be a true leader as described by John C Maxwell, someone whom others follow, “not because they have to, but because they want to.”

On a personal note, Dr Ho’s humility and steadfastness in tirelessly promoting causes he deeply believes in serve as pillars of inspiration for me. It remains for me, to join in the fellow followers of Dr Ho to say a very simple but sincere “thank you” and to wish him good health and great happiness all the days of his life as he celebrates the occasion of his 75th birthday.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Chng Huang Hoon is an Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore. She served as SAAL’s Honorary Secretary from 1998 to 2004 and as President from 2004 to 2008. She was Chair of the Programme Sub-Committee for AILA2002@Singapore. Her current research activity lies in feminist classroom practice. She is currently the Director of Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning (CDTL) in NUS.

Low Ee Ling is an Associate Professor at the English Language & Literature Academic group & concurrently appointed as the Sub-Dean for Degree Programmes at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. She has served as the Vice-President of the Singapore Association for Applied Linguistics since 2004. She has published widely on speech rhythm, intonation and features of Singapore English as a world variety of English in internationally refereed journals. In 2008, she won the Advanced Fulbright research scholarship to research on cross-cultural aspects of English language teacher preparation in Singapore and the United States.

Christianty Nur was a former student of Dr Ho Wah Kam when she was doing her MA at the RELC. She teaches at the Centre for English Language Communicaton, National University of Singapore.

Anne Pakir is an Associate Professor at NUS’s Department of English Language and Literature and was President of SAAL from 1990 to 2004 and Chair of the Organising Committee for AILA 2002, the 13th World Congress of Applied Linguistics, held in Singapore. She currently serves as Director of the International Relations Office, NUS, and is President of the Fulbright

10 *SAAL Quarterly*

Association (Singapore) as well as the adviser for SAAL. She is also currently on the Board of TOEFL (Princeton, New Jersey), as well as on the boards of several journals, including *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *World Englishes* and *English Today*.

Qi Fang is an Associate Professor of applied linguistics, and he is currently the Head of Department, English Educational, School of Foreign Languages, Shenzhen University, PRC. Qi Fang serves as the advisor of Editorial Board of the journal *Asian Englishes*. His research interests are in L2 writing instruction and pedagogical issues, Contrastive Rhetoric, Task-Based Language Learning, CALL and English Language Teaching Methodology. His papers have been published on TESOL/ELT journals in China, Japan and Singapore.

Shi Zhili has been a teacher of English and Chinese with international and local schools in Singapore. He also taught SM2 courses with the Centre of English Language Communications, NUS from 2007 to 2008. Besides teaching, he is also interested in translation of Chinese and English and taught Principles and Practices of Translation at Singapore Chinese Chamber Institute of Business from 2005 to 2007.

Teng Su Ching has a long association with SAAL. She worked with SAAL from the early days, and has once served as Honorary Treasurer and also Vice-President of SAAL. She continues to advise the SAAL EXCO on matters relating to finance and strategy. She is now a busily retired person who holds many jobs, including serving as Justice of the Peace and managing a family business.

Ruth Wong is an Associate Professor in English Language & Literature Academic Group at the National Institute of Education. Dr Ho mentored and nurtured her when she joined NIE in 1986.

Zhang Meisuo is a teacher in the Mother Tongue Languages Department, Raffles Institution. He received his MA in Applied Linguistics in 1998 under the supervision of Dr Ho Wah Kam.

Zhu Shenfa is a lecturer at the Centre for English Language Communication, National University of Singapore. He has served as an exco member in SAAL since 2006. His research interests lie in phonetics and phonology, contrastive and translation studies of English and Chinese, teaching English and Chinese as a foreign/second language, and features of Singapore English and Singapore Mandarin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This little tribute would not have been possible without the participation of various individuals. We wish to thank Chris Nur, Anne Pakir, Qi Fang, Shi Zhili, Teng Su Ching, Ruth Wong, Zhang Meisuo and Zhu Shenfa, for willingly responding to our call to participate in this project. Their unhesitating agreement to do so speaks volume to Dr Ho's positive impact in both their professional and personal lives. Most importantly, we wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to the man himself, Dr Ho Wah Kam — for his leadership and mentorship, and for his varied contributions to education and to various institutions such as the TTC, NIE, RELC, SAAL and STU. His warmth and humour, and sense of mission and commitment will always be treasured by those of us who had the good fortune to work with him, and to know him. Thank you, Dr Ho!

Huang Hoon and Ee Ling
July 2008

THE EVOLUTION OF ELT IN SINGAPORE

Special Focus

3rd CELC International Symposium

26–28 May 2010

Organised by the Centre for English Language Communication
National University of Singapore

At the 3rd CELC Symposium in May 2010, a series of paper and workshop presentations related to the evolution of ELT in the primary and secondary schools in Singapore has been scheduled. These sessions will be of particular interest to Singapore teachers and ELT practitioners who are interested in understanding the local ELT landscape at the primary and secondary levels.

Three prominent teacher leaders from the Ministry of Education have been invited to give these papers. They are Mr Ang Pow Chew, Mr Philip McConnell and Mrs Davamoni Regina née Chan S T. There are two key areas that they will address — first, the change in English language education; and second, current effective classroom strategies in the teaching of English in Singapore.

The sessions led by the MOE teacher leaders will demonstrate the connection

and synergy between educational policy that is made at the MOE level and classroom practices and strategies implemented on the ground in response to the shifting social and global demands in language learning and teaching.

The 2010 English Language Syllabus: Evolution of EL Teaching and Learning in Singapore Schools

INVITED PAPER

In 2005, the English Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review Committee (ELCPRC) was formed to review the teaching and learning of the English Language in Singapore Schools. This review highlighted the shifting of language use amongst Singaporeans over the years. From the 2006 Primary One cohort data, the percentage of pupils who spoke English at home has increased over the years. Two broad groups of English Language learners could be discerned: about half the Primary One students used English as the main language at home, while the other half used mainly the Mother Tongue or other languages. Since the 1950s, the EL Syllabuses in Singapore have reflected the changing aims, approaches and emphases of EL teaching and learning. Global and national concerns, the changing role of EL in Singapore and the world, the needs of our pupils and research in language and language pedagogies have influenced syllabus design. The 2010 EL Syllabus underscored the sustained effort to improving language education for our students. A commentary on the evolution of EL teaching and learning in Singapore will be made through tracing the genesis and implementation of the EL syllabuses across three decades.



***Ang Pow Chew** is the Deputy Director of the Languages and Literature Branch in the Curriculum Planning and Development Division, Ministry of Education Singapore. Over the last 20 years, he has served in various roles: Teacher, Head of Department, Principal of a Secondary School and Deputy Director of Educational Technology. The Language and Literature Branch is involved in the design, review, and revision of among others the English Language, Literature and Theatre Studies & Drama Syllabuses, and the implementation of these syllabuses in schools. In addition, the branch promotes activities to stimulate interest in these subjects in schools.*

Unlocking the Cells

In the light of recent findings in the field of neuroscience about how the brain learns by making meaning (particularly the implications of research by Professor John Geake, Oxford Brookes University, on the implications of cognitive neuroscience for pedagogy), this workshop will illustrate a set of Inquiry Based Learning strategies for the English language classroom which make use of literary and real world texts to stimulate thinking skills, close reading and oral work and to develop knowledge about language.

***Philip McConnell** graduated from Sussex University in 1972 and gained his Post-Graduate Certificate in Education from Liverpool University in 1973. He came to Singapore in 1991 after teaching in the UK for 17 years, where he had served variously as Discipline Master, Head of Department, Head of Faculty and Head of Sixth Form.*



After three years as acting HOD at Chung Cheng High School (Main), he moved to Anderson Junior College as Subject Head for Literature in 1994, and then, in 1998, to Raffles Junior College, where he was in charge of the Raffles Humanities Scholarship Programme. He was appointed Master Teacher for Literature in 2008.

Master Workshop 2: The 3Cs Approach for 21st Century EL/Lit Classrooms

Drawing from research findings of 21st century skills, this workshop demonstrates how the 3 key traits of curiosity, confidence and cooperation (3Cs) can help the English Language/Literature teacher develop the necessary skills and dispositions for her students to be effective learners and contributors in the 21st century. While curiosity is a heightened state of interest resulting in the motivation and disposition to learn, confidence comes through opportunities given for critical thinking, giving feedback and offering perspectives in the EL/Lit classroom. Equally important is the student's ability to cooperate and work well with and add value to the ideas of others.

Participants will get to experience some hands-on activities that use Thinking Routines (Harvard Project Zero) to develop the 3Cs, and take away a basic framework for their own school's 3Cs programme as well as scoring rubrics to assess the 3Cs. Text used: The Three Questions, based on a story by Leo Tolstoy

Davamoni Regina née Chan ST is a Master Teacher with MOE, Singapore, and supports the literacy development in 11 primary schools. She offers differentiated English Language training programmes for Heads of Departments, beginning teachers (BTs), teacher leaders and developing teachers, who are at different developmental and professional functioning in these schools.



Regina also works closely with other educational agencies. She supports the Curriculum Planning and Development Division in their new initiatives or nationwide programmes; and the National Institute of Education by providing customised workshops for in-service teachers. Since 2007, she has been working with the British Council to run workshops for their Primary Innovation project, and is currently one of two master trainers for their 120-hour Train-the-Trainer course. In addition, Regina is involved in a longitudinal research project in assessment and literacy at the Melbourne University Assessment Research Centre.

Happening in Singapore

International Conference on Learning and Teaching Critical Pedagogies • Changing Perspectives • Crossing Boundaries

Organised by Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore
9–11 June 2010

This three-day conference is a celebration of Temasek Polytechnic's commitment to enhancing the quality of student learning through the continuing professional development of educators. Keynote speakers are: *David Boud*, University of Technology, Sydney; *Stephen Brookfield*, University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis; *Diana Laurillard*, University of London; *Gary Poole*, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

Website: <http://www.tp.edu.sg/events/intlconference/default.htm>

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