Symposium
on
Ancestry and Language

The University of Sydney
16-17 May 2019

This 2-day symposium is an event of *The ebb and flow of heritage: Investigating urban multilingual diaspora*, a HKU-USydney Strategic/ Priority Partnership project (Umberto Ansaldo and Nicholas Enfield, PIs; Lisa Lim, Co-I), one of whose goals is to further strong and dynamic collaborations between the two institutions. This symposium brings into conversation scholars from Hong Kong and Sydney on the topic of heritage/ migrant/ community/ indigenous languages, drawing on the research and expertise on situations and experiences in both Greater China and Australia. We explore dimensions of, inter alia, migration, migrant languages, minority languages, indigenous languages, language acquisition, education, and language policy, with a central question being how cultural ancestries and linguistic practices are managed, in particular in urban multicultural ecologies.

Venue
Sutherland Room, Holme Building, Science Road, University of Sydney, Camperdown NSW2006

Organisers
Lisa Lim, Umberto Ansaldo and Nicholas Enfield
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Registration & contact
https://slam-events.sydney.edu.au/calendar/ancestry-and-language-hku-usyd-partnership-symposium/
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~ ABSTRACTS ~

Languages in New South Wales: What can we learn from public data?
Phil Benson* & Alice Chik**
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When languages are discussed in Australia, the discussion is frequently based on census statistics. In fact, community languages are only discussed in the media when the latest census statistics are released. However, census statistics only provide a historical snapshot of linguistic diversity in residential areas. In this paper we identify a wider range of public statistics indicating different distributions of languages in political, commercial, social, educational and cultural domains. Our findings indicate an unequal distribution and visibility of languages in different domains. We will discuss the potential uses and limitations of the various sources of public data on languages in New South Wales, and the implications of the unequal distributions that we have observed.

Transnational identities and ideologies in Hong Kong
Katherine Chen
English Language Centre, University of Macau & School of English, University of Hong Kong

Transnationality research has emerged in the past 20 years in cultural anthropology, population studies, economics, social and cultural geography. Recently there have been more sociolinguistic research on return or counter-diasporic migration. This paper looks into language and related practices and ideologies of transnationally mobile people by showcasing ethnographic research on Chinese return migration in Hong Kong from 2002-2016. This paper examines the transnational practices of individuals and, in Aihwa Ong's (2003) terms, the conditions (or lack of) that enable their mobilities both at the physical and symbolic/social levels, and how these practices can be understood in times of sweeping sociopolitical changes with evolving relationships between individuals and the nation states. I argue that the multilingual practices and ideologies of these individuals are acts of differentiation that illuminate the opposing language and cultural ideologies of Chinese vs. Western, which repeat themselves recursively in multiple scales across socio-historical periods, as these seemingly "micro" interactions are traced to review larger elements at work, from the distribution of language as (symbolic) resources in society, to issues of class, mobility, and cultural/ethnic/national identities.

Community Languages Schools: Hashtag not heritage?
Ken Cruickshank
School of Education & Social Work, University of Sydney

Community Languages schools were first started in the 1850s by parents to pass on heritage language and culture to children; there are now over 100,000 students learning one of 64 languages across Australia. These schools have often been seen as bastions of conservatism where community groups struggle to maintain 'traditional' cultures into future generations.

We have undertaken three major research projects: first into the provision and uptake of languages in NSW with case studies of community languages schools (ARC Linkage, 2011-2015); second into the 3,000 volunteer teachers (SICLE, 2017/8); and this year into the organisation, curriculum and teaching in the schools (SICLE 2018/9). Our key finding is that the schools are sites where notions 'community' and identities beyond the family are played out. On the one hand, this could mean constructs of what counts as 'traditional'. More commonly, with changes in global migration, travel and technology, the schools are reflecting the complex affiliations of third and fourth generation Australian students. We argue that the schools are places in-between the families and mainstream schools where young people are agentive in negotiating identity options.

Making government decisions about communicating with Australia's multilingual, urban communities
Alexandra Grey
Sydney Law School, University of Sydney

I will present an update on a new research project which is currently underway. It investigates whether, and how, laws and policies at various levels of the Australian government guide decisions about using languages other than English in public communications. The study focuses on Mandarin and Cantonese, which feature amongst the many language the government sometimes uses. The research is driven by evidence that government departments and agencies nowadays often seek to reach their communities by using Mandarin- and Cantonese-medium communications, and that urban communities are increasingly linguistically diverse. However, so far the study is finding an absence of coordinated or targeted rules, principles or guidelines relevant to such decisions. The paper reports on the my recent audit of relevant Australian law and policy, and explains the just-commenced institutional and community-based fieldwork which will further investigate how such decisions are made, why, and how multilingual and/or non-English speaking community members could be involved.

New directions in the study of language maintenance: Multilingual landscapes of Sydney libraries
Anikó Hatoss, Elise Brake & Dimitrije Karadarevic
Linguistics, School of Humanities & Languages, University of New South Wales

Language maintenance research in the past mainly focussed on census-based generalised data on trends of intergenerational shift. Researching the complexity of factors in language maintenance seems as an arduous task, but linguistic landscapes provide an innovative insight into the everyday life of migrant communities and can help us understand how the linguistic ecology shapes migrants' language practices. This presentation will analyse how migrant identities are maintained through inclusive government planning, specifically, how Sydney's libraries use their spaces and services to create an environment that reflects their language ideology. Our studies concluded that libraries, as language managers, organise their ecology to either promote and maintain migrant identities using resources, services and signage as a normal part of the human experience, or they sequester this information. The paper argues for more fieldwork to truly account for the complexity of everyday multilingualism in migration contexts.

Law, linguistics, and the status of languages as discrete objects
Christopher Hutton
School of English, University of Hong Kong

In sociolinguistics and related areas, the position is increasingly adopted that languages and other varieties are not well-defined objects. This poststructuralist or postmodern turn is an index of wider trends in the humanities and social sciences (forms of contextualism, social constructionism, anti-essentialism), and is reflected in the increasing use of terms like translanguaging. Along with this understanding of language ontology there is a related political sensibility, namely the assumption that the denial of the autonomy of language systems is politically progressive. This reflects the argument that modern European nationalism, in purifying and standardizing vernacular languages, marginalized both non-standard class/regional varieties and (what became thought of as) minority languages. A further locus for this is a critique of the classificatory regimes of colonialism, in which forms of language engineering were employed which, it is argued, damaged the viability of postcolonial states. The recognition of fluidity and blurred boundaries between categories in this sense sets itself against authoritarian cooption of the language 'life-world' by state modernity. This paper looks at these questions from the point of view of law, which cannot operate with fluid or ill-defined categories, and within the politics of minority and indigenous languages, where reification is a necessary prerequisite to cultural and political activism.

Engaging enquiry into heritage languages: Linguistic minorities of HK
Lisa Lim
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Using research on Hong Kong's linguistic diversity and heritage languages as a case in point, I distil three elements that I consider crucial for nurturing students with the integrity and competences for engaging with issues and research involving cultural and linguistic diversity in the complex and changing ecologies of the 21st-century knowledge economy. First, teaching practice that involves as a major component the conducting of research in the field – in particular in local urban contexts and communities that are at the same time familiar and unfamiliar – affords students experiential learning, sharpens their acuity towards issues in their own society, and is a means of motivating original and socially relevant research. Second, the platform for delivery needs to hold potential for the authentic and the contemporary – for instance, having projects contribute to an online resource – underscores to students the value of their research output beyond course and institution, for engagement and impact. Finally, leading students to a critical reflection helps crystallise their learning experience, setting the stage for future work. Together, such engaged enquiry can bring about a transformation in students, comprising part of the concerted efforts we can make in developing research and teaching practice for meaningful societal impact.

"Why multilingual Filipinos choose monolingualism":
Understanding the factors that silence Filipino migrants' multilingual practices
Loy Lising
Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University

Drawing from three data sets (a Macquarie University Staff Grant focused on Filipino skilled migrants to Australia, the 2016 CENSUS data, and an ongoing ALS-funded project on, for and with Filipino migrants to Sydney), this talk explores the factors that (de)motivate Filipino migrants' use of the languages in their multilingual repertoire. It does so by unpacking these three factors: (1) the linguistic trajectories that Filipino migrants come from, (2) the different migration pathways that they take for entry into Australia, and (3) the tapestry of linguistic practices as shown in the data. Furthermore, it argues that these linguistic practices are underpinned by specific beliefs about languages, shaped by participants' sociocultural, educational, economic and linguistic background and the way societies that they have been a part of conceive of multilingualism.

Doing Subaltern Linguistics: Reasons, directions, and early outcomes
Ahmar Mahboob
Department of Linguistics, School of Literature, Art, & Media, University of Sydney

Across Australia, there has been a sharp increase of people from across South Asia, representing 100s of languages. In this presentation, instead of talking about what these languages are and who they represent, I will identify some of the reasons these people are here. In particular, I will evaluate the role of linguistics in creating myths in Indigenous and colonial communities that often contribute to their marginalisation. I will then discuss some of the ways in which I am trying to address these issues in my work on subaltern linguistics. Subaltern linguistics is a linguistics carried out by and for a community's self-empowerment, well-being, and prosperity. Subaltern linguistics can be carried out by anyone. The goal of subaltern linguistics is to enable economies, practices, projects, and resources that can be made and used by community members and leaders to develop for their own benefit. In this presentation, I will share some of the projects that I am currently working on, how these are being developed, and some of the outcomes of these projects.

Ancestry and identity in Chinese heritage families
Stephen Matthews* & Virginia Yip**
*Linguistics, School of Humanities, University of Hong Kong &
**Department of Linguistics & Modern Languages, Chinese University of Hong Kong

In ongoing work, we explore the extent to which Chinese is being acquired by the generation born in an overseas community such as the USA and UK. The Child Heritage Chinese Corpus (CHCC) by Mai, Matthews and Yip (2018) documents the language development of American-born Chinese children, who were exposed to their heritage language (Mandarin and/or Cantonese) at home, and the societal majority language English at school and at home. The corpus currently contains longitudinal data covering the age range from 1;07-4;01 from three children: Luna, Avia and Winston (see https://childes.talkbank.org/access/Biling/CHCC.html). In immigrant communities, a common pattern is for the ancestral language to be lost in the course of three generations in a process of intergenerational language shift. A case study by Li, Matthews and Yip (in preparation) shows that language shift is far from inevitable, but can be reversed as outlined by Fishman (1991). In the family studied, the second generation has resumed acquisition and use of Mandarin in order to transmit the language to the third generation. We focus on the role of the first and second generations and of new communications technology in enabling transmission of the ancestral language. The reversal of language shift is motivated by an emergent American-Chinese identity.

Multilingualism and identity amongst Italo-Australians
Antonia Rubino
Department of Italian Studies, School of Languages & Cultures, University of Sydney

This paper presents the findings of a project that explores linguistic choices, language preferences and identity claims among bi- (English, Italian) and trilingual (English, Italian and dialect) Italo-Australian youth. The participants are females and males aged between 18 and 30 whose parents or grandparents migrated from Italy, who self-identify as Italian and/or Italo-Australian. The Italo-Australians are the second largest non-English speaking ethnic group present today in Australia, with over one million people reporting Italian ancestry in the latest (2016) Census. Drawing on data from an online survey and in-depth interviews, I will discuss these young people's self-reported multilingual practices, their language attitudes towards their heritage languages (both Italian and dialect), how they make sense of their linguistic resources, and the identities that they construct for themselves as heritage language speakers and/or learners.

Chinese as a community language in Australia
Linda Tsung
Department of Chinese Studies, School of Languages & Cultures, University of Sydney

Chinese is one of the oldest community languages in Australia, with Chinese immigration to Australia dating back to the earliest days of British colonisation in 1788. This paper examines how Chinese language shifted from a largely unknown and, in some circles, denigrated language under the White Australia policy to a prestige language. How the two constructs of Chinese as a 'community' language and as a high status language have been played out in NSW, Australia. The study explores why 95% of students learning Chinese at school drop the subject for their HSC study. The data discussed in the paper were drawn from interviews and observations conducted with teachers, school principals, parents and students from Chinese community languages schools and government and independent primary and secondary schools where Chinese is currently taught. The findings indicate the complex relationship between Chinese language as linguistic capital, as local cultural capital for family relationships and the maintenance of heritage values. The paper identifies the NSW HSC matriculation ranking system as a major cause of students stopping the study of Chinese in their senior years of schooling. In addition, Chinese community languages schools show a shift to students' studying in Mandarin as the standard language at the expense of Cantonese and other dialects spoken at the home.

Closing panel: Desiderata
Katherine Chen *(U Macau & HKU)*, Nicholas Enfield *(U Sydney)*, Ingrid Piller *(Macquarie U)*
Moderator: Umberto Ansaldo *(U Sydney & HKU)*