

Research Developments and Highlights

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Third Meeting of the Singapore Child Language Special Interest Group (SCLSIG3)

The SCLSIG (Singapore Child Language Special Interest Group) is chaired by its founder, Madalena Cruz-Ferreira from the Department of English Language and Literature, and is networked at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sclsig/>. It gathers international and Singaporean academics, teachers and speech-language pathologists interested in developing insights into child language in Singapore. The SCLSIG3 met on 27 October 2007 at the Department of English Language and Literature, NUS on the topic on Language Models at Home and in School. The following talks were presented at the meeting:

1. Becoming Bilingual: The Singapore Way (Linda Thompson, English Language and Literature Academic Group, NIE)
2. Attitudes towards Literary Tamil and Standard Spoken Tamil in Singapore (Seetha Lakshmi [with Vanithamani Saravanan and Imelda Caleon], Asian Languages and Cultures Academic Group, NIE)
3. Home vs. School Language: Practices among Malay-speaking Children (Norhaida Aman, Asian Languages and Cultures Academic Group, NIE; Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice, NIE)
4. Singlish in the school: an impediment or a resource? (Rani Rubdy, English Language and Literature Academic Group, NIE)

The two previous SIG meetings addressed *Child Language Research in Singapore and Language Norming in Singapore*, respectively. The Singapore Association for Applied Linguistics (SAAL) hosts SCLSIG write-ups and publications at <http://www.saal.org.sg/sigs.html>.

Multimodal Analysis Lab, Interactive & Digital Media Institute

The proliferation of visual images and video texts taking place through the rapid advance of digital technology is a major problem for government, industry and business. Efficient practices for managing data in text-based documents have been developed. However, visual images and video texts remain elusive with regards to management, coding and searching for information. The problem intensifies, as video-sharing websites become the standard forum for exchanging information. Dynamic digital texts clearly require theoretical concepts and analytical approaches which extend beyond those developed for text-based data. Therefore, social scientists and computer scientists are working together in the newly established Multimodal Analysis Lab in the Interactive & Digital Media Institute (IDMI) to develop new approaches to multimodal and multimedia data analysis, storage and retrieval. IDMI is a university-level research institute for the development of cutting-edge digital media technologies.

Social scientists and computer scientists do not usually work together to solve problems. However, research collaboration between the two groups in the Multimodal Analysis Lab, each sharing and expanding their own knowledge base and expertise, will advance existing approaches to multimodal and multimedia analysis. The specific objectives of the research programme in the lab are:

1. to develop prototype interactive digital media technology for multimodal analysis of
 - (a) images, video texts and interactive digital sites, and
 - (b) print and digital learning materials and classroom activities;
2. to investigate the integrative dynamics of complex meaning-making practices; and

3. to examine the relative affordances and constraints of different forms of technology for knowledge creation and the enactment of social relations.

The research programme will advance arts and social science research through the development of specially designed tools and digital platforms to dynamically model and analyze multimodal discourse and events. In addition, the research will advance existing computer science approaches to multimedia analysis which tend to depend on low-level feature information within specific domains of activity. Finally,

research in the Multimodal Analysis Lab will advance our understanding of the relations between technology and ways of thinking and being. The Multimodal Analysis Lab is currently housed at 9 Prince George's Park, National University of Singapore. The official launch of the lab will take place in January 2008.

For further information, please contact Multimodal Analysis Lab Director, Associate Professor Kay O'Halloran (email: ellkoh@nus.edu.sg; idmkoh@nus.edu.sg) and visit the Multimodal Analysis Lab website: <http://multimodal-analysis-lab.org/>

NRF/MDA-IDM External Research Grant

The Media Development Authority (MDA) has awarded Principal Investigator Associate Professor Kay O'Halloran funding for more than \$2.5 million to undertake the research project *Events in the World: Developing & Using Interactive Digital Media for Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)* under the first Interactive Digital Media Research and Development (IDM R&D) Grant Call.

The *Events in the World* project team

will describe the multimodal portrayal of key events in print media, television and the internet by developing and using prototype software MDA-Events for multimodal discourse analysis of images, video texts and interactive digital sites. The project team will analyze the construction of events across technologies (print, electronic and digital) and cultures (Asia/Pacific, North America, and Europe) in areas which include world events, business, science, education and arts/enter-

tainment. The *Events in the World* research project integrates social science approaches to multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) with computer science approaches to multimedia analysis. MDA-Events software will have downstream applications for R&D in multimodal/ multimedia analysis, search and retrieval. The research project will be undertaken in the Multimodal Analysis Lab in the Interactive & Digital Media Institute (IDMI) (<http://multimodal-analysis-lab.org/>).

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES PROGRAMME

Dr Stan B. H. Tan, with co-researcher Dr Pow Choon Piew, Department of Geography, has been awarded a SEASREP regional Collaboration Grant for the project *Beyond Hills & Plains: Rethinking Economy, State, and Society in the Southeast Asian Massif*. This is an international collaborative research project involving the College of Resources, Environment & Earth of Yunnan University of China, Centre for Asia-Pacific Studies of Hanoi National University of Vietnam, the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences of the National University of Laos, and the Institut D'asie Orientale, CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research), Lyon, France. The SEASREP grant will be used to support the costs of fieldwork for the regional collaborators from China, Vietnam, and Laos. The research will take place in Yunnan province of China, Lao Cai province of Vietnam, and parts of northern Laos.

Dr Chie Ikeya has been awarded a second year of funding by the Toyota Foundation, Special Subject Research Grant for a collaborative project she is directing entitled *Cataloging, Transcription, Translation and Preservation of Indigenous Dhammasat Palm-leaf Manuscripts Transmitted in Myanmar*. The collaborative research team comprising Myanmar, Japanese, American, and French researchers undertakes the first comprehensive survey and inventory of the extant legal and jurisprudential manuscript texts transmitted in Myanmar between the 11th and 19th centuries. In addition to digitizing and microfilming selected documents in urgent need of preservation, the team will also edit a collection of facsimiles, transcriptions, and English and Japanese translations of selected manuscripts.