DRAL/ESEA 2017
Day 2 Plenary

The end of innocence: applied linguistics and boundary-drawing in the new age of nationalism

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Outline

1) Recent trends: politics and applied linguistics

2) Boundary-drawing and naming in applied linguistics: significance, examples (World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca)

3) Groupishness: indications for the study of language

Groupishness

'In the terrible days after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, I felt an urge so primitive I was embarrassed to admit it to my friends:

I wanted to put an American flag decal on my car.'

Jonathan Haidt (2012), *The Righteous Mind*

Groupishness

Everyday groupish behaviour   Nationalism

Boundary-drawing, naming
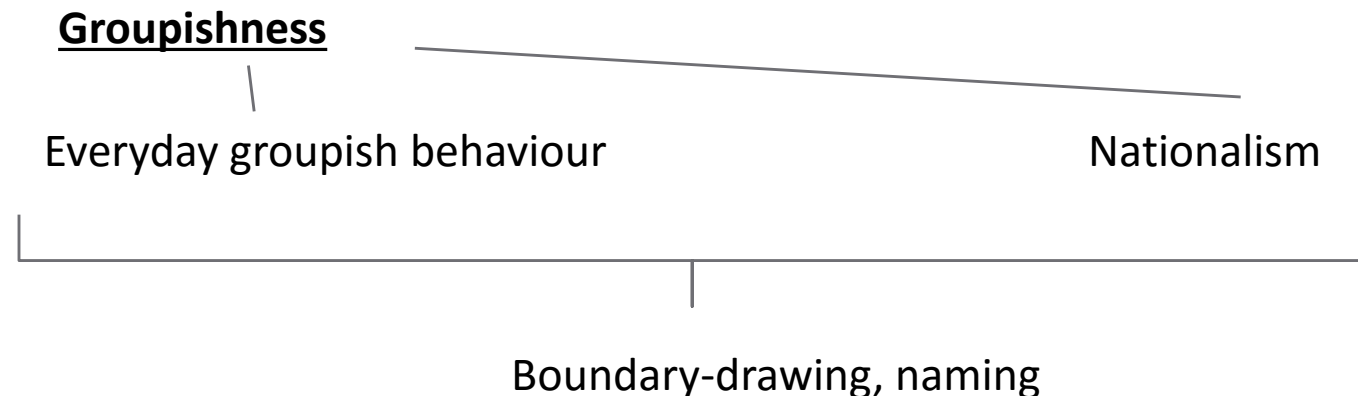
Ideology

Not merely 'false consciousness':

'a society's implicit theory of what types of object exist in the world (categorisation); of the way that world works (causation); and of the values to be assigned to objects and processes' (Fowler 1996: 10-11)
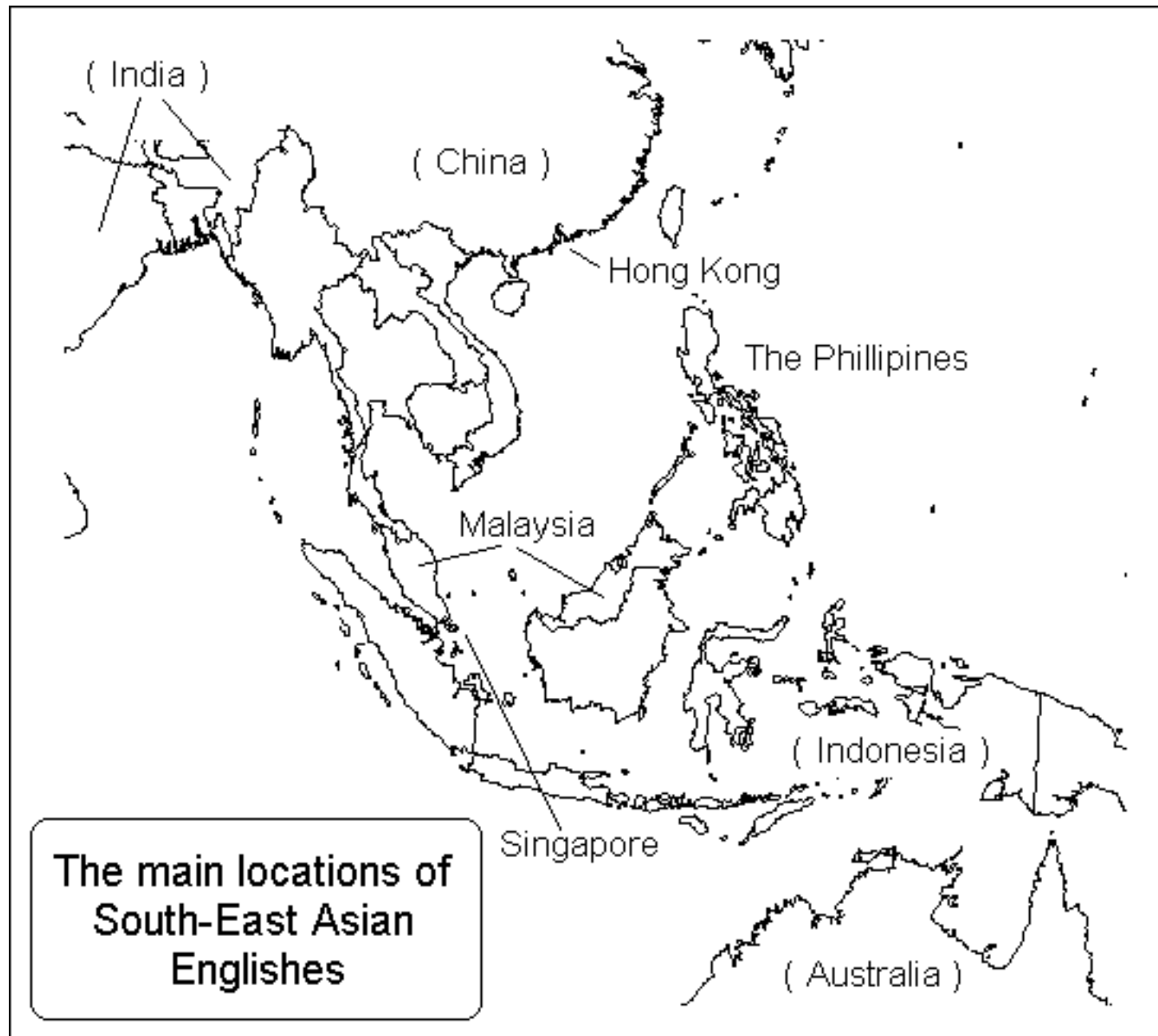
Language ideologies: 'diverse beliefs…used by speakers of all types as models for constructing linguistic evaluations and engaging in communicative activity' (Duranti 2004: 497)

Meanwhile, in applied linguistics…

- The 'multi/plural turn' in applied linguistics: 'a tension between hybridity and rootedness' (Kubota 2014: 5)

- Hybridity views, e.g. translanguaging, superdiversity, heteroglossia: tend to reject geographical boundaries

- Pluralist views ('rootedness' or 'authentication'), e.g. World Englishes: tend to maintain geographical boundaries ('Hong Kong English')

Boundary-drawing 1: **World Englishes** (a 'pluralist' view)

(e.g. 'Hong Kong English;, 'China English', etc.)

(India)
(China)
Hong Kong
The Phillipines
Malaysia
(Indonesia)
Singapore
(Australia)

The main locations of South-East Asian Englishes

Source: *Studying Varieties of English, Universitat Duisburg-Essen*

The nature and importance of naming (1)

1) Naming carries assumptions: language practices and groups have clear boundaries that pre-exist naming

2) Naming affects practices:'the diversity of English is both identified and shaped by acts of naming (Seargeant 2010: 111)

A Dictionary of Hong Kong English

Words from the Fragrant Harbor

Patrick J. Cummings and Hans-Georg W...

World Englishes strategies: an alternative standard, codification

Boundary-drawing: 'To accept new or modified norms requires some sort of a consensus...as to what they consist of' (Schneider 2011: 219)

South China Morning Post, 21 January 2016

Not an alternative standard

No suggestion of 'consensus'

Hybridity + rootedness (or, rootedness = hybridity?)

The descriptive paradox: 'online Thai English'?

1 Cherry: oh
2 Cherry: Ken-noi ngai [How about Ken-Noi?[6]]
3 Dream: Mai wai la [No way]
4 Dream: Too young
5 Dream: They are the same age as my students loei
6 Cherry: shouldnt b phd . . .
7 Cherry: should b undergrad . . .
8 Cherry: but everything too late now
9 Cherry: herr [<sigh>]
10 Dream: Why don't u have a bf?
11 Cherry: i have
12 Cherry: hahaha
13 Cherry: but i want exciting thing banggg

(Seargeant & Tagg 2011: 505)

We are left with what appears to be a paradox then...the methodology for our analysis is premised on the logic which underlies the conception of the variety: namely, we are aiming to identify what appear to be systematic regularities that can be associated with a particular community of language users.

Yet the phenomenon as a whole – the actual discourse – cannot be subsumed under the category of a variety. It exhibits too much diversity; it does not have obviously identifiable systematic regularities...

(Seargeant & Tagg 2011: 512)

'It is certain that in the theoretical level, the importance and necessity of teaching China English is beyond discussion, yet for all practical purposes, teaching China English is still unattainable in the short term'

(Wu 2016: 270)

Alternatively: good in practice, but not in theory

Boundary-drawing 2: **English as a Lingua Franca (ELF);** a 'hybridity' view?

'any use of English among speakers of different first languages' (Seidlhofer 2011: 7)

Boundary-drawing assumptions of the ELF label:

ELF	Non-ELF (ENALF?)
People with different 'first languages'	People with 'the same first language'

Amelia Hanslow
@AmeliaHanslow

Follow

Trainspotting 2 in Singapore: English subtitles for the Scottish don't accurately follow Begbie's dialogue #censorship

但她需要一个兵士又不同.
Different story when she needs a soldier.

Naming and the construction of scientific knowledge

Stages in the process of knowledge construction (Latour & Woolgar 1986: 176-177):

1) Tentative statements *about* objects or phenomena

2) Splitting: statements start to become objects *in themselves*, taking on 'lives of their own'

3) Inversion: the object becomes the *reason* why the statement was formulated in the first place; it appears as if the object 'has been there all along, just waiting to be revealed'

Splitting and inversion: the unnatural history of 'ELF'

Statements: 'English in international communication'; 'English is being used as a lingua franca'

Splitting: English as a Lingua Franca', 'ELF'; 'emerging varieties'

Splitting and inversion: 'ELF speakers', 'ELF users', 'ELF interactions', etc.)

Communicative activities are recontextualised as 'merely involving the application or use of an underlying language, so construed' (Linell 2004: 9)

What is the 'nature' of 'ELF'?

'In short, then, ELF has taken on a life of its own, independent to a considerable degree of the norms established by its native users' (Seidlhofer 2004: 212)

'English as a lingua franca…is a naturally occurring, very widespread phenomenon' (Cogo & Dewey 2012: 18)

'The enormous formal and functional flexibility of ELF use coupled with its worldwide spread has led to another remarkable feature: that the number of non-native speakers of English is now substantially larger than its English [sic] native speakers' (House 2015: 59)

The nature and importance of naming (2)

Discursive naturalisation: 'TRF [the named substance in question] rapidly become [sic] taken for granted. Its history began to fade away, and remaining traces and scars of its production became less and less significant for practicing scientists' (Latour & Woolgar 1986: 148)

Boundary-drawing and naming construct languages as autonomous objects, thus erasing the decisions that brought them into being

'*they assume as premises that which they set out to demonstrate*' (Pennycook 2007: 91)

New names, same boundaries?

'…instead of talking about ELF users … we can talk about 'ELF-using multilinguals' and 'ELF-using monolinguals', or 'Multilingual ELF users' and 'Monolingual ELF users' (Jenkins 2015: 74)

'I should point out immediately that I am not suggesting a name change for ELF. The paradigm is now well established, and it would simply confuse the issue to change 'Lingua' to 'Multilingua'. In addition, as Suresh Canagarajah has playfully pointed out, it would mean we "have a lot of work to do" changing the name of our conference series, journal, book series and so on. This is not feasible (Jenkins, ibid.)

Towards a definition of ELF…

ELF…

'entails contact between speakers from varying linguacultural backgrounds, which can take place in a fully extensive range of domains and functions'

'involves online modification of English language resources to suit the particular communicative needs of interlocutors, resulting in innovative uses of lexicogrammatical, pragmatic and sociocultural forms'

'entails age-old processes that occur whenever speakers interact, including processes of identity signaling, codeswitching, accommodation and language variation'

(Cogo & Dewey, 2012: 18)

Reasons for the persistence of naming and boundary-drawing

1) Residual structuralism / determinism in applied linguistics: 'the focus of research has shifted from an orientation to features and the ultimate aim of some kind of codification…to an interest in the processes *underlying and determining* the choice of features used in any given ELF interaction' (Jenkins *et al.* 2011: 287; emphasis added)

2) Disciplinary boundaries: undermining the concepts would undermine disciplinary structures and the authority of linguists

3) Strategic essentialism: labelling taps into folk-linguistic beliefs about language (e.g. languages are bounded entities that 'emerge' on their own) and mobilises public opinion

An end to innocence?

- An enhanced awareness of boundary-drawing: normativity and ideology (groupishness in general and within applied linguistics)

- E.g. Kubota's questions:

Who defines what counts as language?

Who proposes either hybridity or authentication as a goal to be sought on what grounds?

Significantly, 'both cultural hybridity and authenticity may work to undermine cultural and political identities' (Kubota 2014: 10)

- 'Linguistic populism': bridging the 'expert'/'folk' divide

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