



# TGIF: The NTU Linguist Chatroom

**Join us! Friday, 13 April 2018, 3.30pm  
@ HSS Conference Room (HSS-05-57)**

## **Age and the City – On Grey Armies, Silver Tsunamis and Golden Opportunities**

The world is aging and Singapore is the fastest aging nation in South East Asia. We've been told that by 2050, one in three Singaporean will be above the age of 65. The country is bracing itself for the possible upheaval this holds for our society. It is impossible to read anything about aging without seeing catch phrases evocative of impending doom like 'ticking time bomb', 'grey revolution' and 'silver tsunami'. Our language is replete with metaphors that capture our underlying fear and loathing of old age. Perhaps, though, in Asia, we are more immune to such negative bias against age because of the more collective world-view and our respect for the elderly. This talk reports on four separate studies on our attitudes and assumptions of aging through the use of language in different contexts. This study uses both direct and indirect approaches to assess overt and covert assumptions about aging. Through data extracted from local newsprint (899 articles), surveys (n=165), IAT experiment (n=52) and field observations of interactions, we constructed a profile of our perception of aging in Singapore. The findings have implications for the way we prepare our community for an aging city. This talk presents and frames aging within a psycho-social model and argues that aging is not just about living longer and living healthier but living better and living happier and this is just as important as the emphasis on health. To do so, we need to realize that communication is critical and until we are able to see aging in a more positive light, it will continue to be a social problem.

### **Speakers**



**Ng Bee Chin** works mainly in the area of bilingualism and multilingualism with a focus on the impact of language contact on individuals and the community they live in. Her research approach is to explore both cognitive and social aspects of language use. Currently, she is working on language and emotion in multilinguals, language attitudes, identity and social categorisation and language and aging. She also works in the area of language as a source of intangible heritage with collaborators in art and design studies. She is currently the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.



**Francesco Cavallaro** is an Associate Professor in Linguistics and Multilingual Studies and the Head of the Centre for Modern Languages. His research interests are in sociolinguistics and the social aspects of bilingualism, especially of minority groups in multilingual contexts. He has published on language maintenance and shift, the demographics of the Italian community in Australia, language attitudes in Singapore and on minority groups in South East Asia. He is the author of the book *Transgenerational language shift: From Sicilian and Italian to Australian English*, published in 2010. His main research focus is the survival of minority languages and the factors that influence both language maintenance and shift.

