

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

presents

Multilingual 'islands': Language variation and policy in Switzerland and Singapore

by

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Abstract:

Unlike the countries around them, both Switzerland and Singapore are characterised by the constitutional recognition of four official languages. Both countries also feature a number of non-official languages, which, however, differ in their history and sociolinguistics: Singapore's 'dialects' of Chinese, for instance, are the varieties of the original first-generation Singaporeans, whereas most non-official languages in Switzerland are the result of recent immigration to urban areas. The language policies implemented by the respective governments also show interesting differences: although boasting four official languages in both cases, the translation of this recognition in everyday practical language use (e.g. in terms of public administration) differs substantially, especially when considering the sub-national levels of governance in Switzerland.

This talk focuses on the linguistic ecologies present in the two countries, and contrasts the ways they have managed their linguistic diversity through policy measures. In highlighting the similarities and differences of Singapore's and Switzerland's linguistic landscape, I hope to show that it is in term of language that their 'island' status is most obvious.

About the Speaker:

Jakob Leimgruber has a *licence ès lettres* from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and a DPhil from the University of Oxford. His research has thus far focused on the language situation in Singapore, with a particular emphasis on the modelling of variation between Colloquial and Standard Singapore English. Since late 2009 he has been Assistant Professor at the University of Freiburg, Germany, where his post-doctoral research concentrates on the sociolinguistics of English in multilingual settings. His other research interests include contact linguistics, language policy, and World Englishes.

All are welcome!!!