

The Future of Linguistics

Ahmar Mahboob / Sunny Boy Brumby / Prof Nomad

Abstract

The roots of linguistics lie in the colonial era and many early “linguists” were agents of colonial powers who served in various positions for European empires (think of Colonel Pickering in *My Fair Lady*). Amongst others, one purpose of this initial work was to enable the political strategy of *divide-and-conquer*. Over time, modern linguists have added to this work, but not revised or decolonised its foundations or approaches. One consequence of this lack of reflexivity is that much of linguistic work today continues to adopt divisive approaches and contribute to divisions in communities.

In this session, we will first identify some foundational problems with the establishment of the discipline, e.g., separating out ‘human language’ from ‘non-human communication’, limiting linguistics to structural-functional analysis, and ignoring other sensory systems in meaning-making and communication. We will then consider a few ways of defining language before extending our discussion to all sensory systems and their relevance to socio-semiotics. The session will then outline some alternative approaches to doing linguistics and look at projects that have drawn on this work. In doing so, we will both question the history of linguistics and outline potential alternatives and the future of linguistics.

Ahmar Mahboob / Prof Nomad / Sunny Boy Brumby, born of South Asian refugees and South Asian social, economic, and political oppression, grew up in exile in the United Arab Emirates, where he was educated not just through conventional schools but also through relationships with artists, poets, journalists, politicians, and writers—all friends of his parents. With them, he had grown to identify oppressive practices in academia and governance. Working on issues of disempowerment and marginalisation, he draws on observation, analysis, and practice to develop both his understandings and his own practices and teaching.

When

Friday, 7 October 2022
12:00 midday (AEST)

Where

Brennan-MacCallum (Bldg A18)
Room 822 (8th floor common room)

And by Zoom:

<https://uni-sydney.zoom.us/j/87326029292>

Contact

nick.enfield@sydney.edu.au

