Department of Anthropology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
香港中文大學人類學系

Friday Seminar

Anthropology's Lost Language Syndrome

Nov 24 | 1:00 - 2:30PM | NAH 114

This article suggests that there has been a decline in attention paid to issues of linguistic difference and translation in ethnography and examines the theoretical trends in anthropology associated with this decline. It analyzes problems in ethnographic contexts where Chinese to English translation (particularly in the translation of various words related to the English semantic domain of "happiness"), have implications for social life, as well as the recent theoretical trends in the discipline that encourage ethnographers to ignore linguistic structure. Utilizing Actor Network Theory and anthropological theorizations of translation, it argues that linguistic structure must be conceived as a significant force in the world and that it must be understood as interacting with other forces in the world.

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