

LIA International Conference 2010

Sanur Beach Hotel & Resort, Bali, Indonesia

April 28 – 30, 2010



Abstract for Plenary Session

English As a Local Language Practice

By: Alastair Pennycook, UTS

Asking what it means to think about language as a local practice, this paper explores ways of thinking about the diversity of English and the different contexts in which it may be used. I will start by examining the different frameworks for understanding English, as a tool of worldwide communication (an international language), as a range of different varieties (world Englishes), or as a regional lingua franca (Asian English). None of these, it will be argued, gives us an adequate understanding of global Englishes as they are currently used. New technologies and communications are enabling immense and complex flows of people, signs, sounds, and images across the world that demand that we rethink the ways we consider English. Drawing on a variety of regional contexts and examples, from Singaporean websites to Vietnamese job advertisements, from Indian newspaper articles to Philippine primary school vision statements, from asylum seeker English use to rap lyrics, I will argue that we need to understand language in terms of local practices. Once we start to consider English as a local language in this way, questions about varieties of English – Indonesian English, Asian English, International English – become less important than an understanding of language as something we do rather than something we use.