

Keynote Speech 1 (10:00 to 11:10 HKT, 9th July 2024/C-LP-11)

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Innovation and Sustainability at the Global Mobility Turn

Abstract

The present health, environmental, and economic crises have inspired a reexamination of dominant academic paradigms for their role in the human condition. While scientific and educational developments have been attributed to the global “mobility turn” or “mobilities paradigm” (Urry 2000; Buscher, Urry, and Witchger 2011; Faist 2013), this trajectory has also contributed to the present global crisis. I will examine the ideologies that have constituted the mobility turn since 14th century European modernity. They are: Mobility is progress; Mobility is individuality against tradition; Mobility is resistance against control; Mobility expands horizons (both geographically and intellectually); Mobility conquers space in favor of time; and Geographical mobility is social mobility. I will demonstrate that these ideologies have also influenced a linguistics based on genealogical and temporal foundations (i.e., privileging peoplehood and teleological progress). In their place, I will articulate a spatial orientation based on land-based Non-Western epistemologies, including mine in South Asia. This spatial paradigm promotes a vision of relationality and dependency between human and nonhuman beings, and communication through embodied semiotic resources, complementing the nonlinear mobilities of space and time that focus on sustainability. I outline what this alternate orientation means for education.

Biography

Athelstan Suresh Canagarajah is a Sri Lankan Tamil scholar in the fields of sociolinguistics, literacy, and English language teaching. He is currently the Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Applied Linguistics, English, and Asian Studies at Pennsylvania State University. He is best known for introducing orientations to language and education from traditions and practices in the Global South to diversify dominant norms and policies in higher education and academia. He has played a leading role in empirically studying, theorizing, and defining the notion of translingual practice, which introduces a way of looking at communication as exceeding bounded languages and involving a negotiation of diverse semiotic repertoires, including words, multimodal resources, objects and artifacts, and material structures. He treats this ecological, ethical, and inclusive orientation to speaking and writing as part of his South Asian heritage and ancient practices in the Global South, which were later suppressed by European colonization.

