

Linguistics Research Seminar Series 2008

**Monday, October 27 at 11.00 am
Linguistics seminar Room - W5C221**

**Dr. Kimie Takahashi, AMEP Research Centre,
Linguistics Department, Macquarie University**

Commodifying 'old age' in tourism: Senior Japanese tourists in Australia

What does it mean to be 'old' and retired in the world's most rapidly aging society, Japan? For millions of senior Japanese today, there are few social practices more alluring than overseas travel, through which they invest in and navigate the 'second stage' of their lives. Although their potential as an emerging market is increasingly acknowledged in recent tourism studies, the discourse of old age vis-à-vis international tourism still remains unexplored in the field of sociolinguistics. To this end, this seminar seeks to investigate the discursive commodification of old age in tourism industries. Through the case study of Japanese post-war baby boomers (*dankai sedai*) as consumers of international tourism, I will examine: (1) the role of languages and the media in promoting desire for overseas travel and (2) the construction and negotiation of identities as evidenced in their travel narratives. The data for this seminar comes from an ongoing multi-site ethnography of tourism between Japan and Australia (funded by a Macquarie University Research Development Grant and directed by Ingrid Piller). In order to capture the objects in motion, i.e. discourse, desire and identity, I will draw on three types of data: (1) media texts, (2) interviews with senior Japanese, and (3) participant observation in tourism-related sites in Australia. Our preliminary findings highlight the complex interplay among macro- and micro-discourses of aging, multilingualism and consumerism in the Australia-Japan tourism contexts.

For more information about the ongoing project, visit:

[www.http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/research_projects/2008/the_role_of_multilingual_practices_and_language_learning_in_the_australian_tourism_industry](http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/research_projects/2008/the_role_of_multilingual_practices_and_language_learning_in_the_australian_tourism_industry)