



Asian Studies Centre,  
St. Antony's College, University of Oxford  
**The Southeast Asia Seminar**



*Shifting Words:  
Language Pride and Language Endangerment in Indonesia*

Emily Gasser, Swarthmore College  
2 p.m., Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May, Deakin Room, St Antony's College



With roughly 720 indigenous languages from 30 families, Indonesia is home to a wealth of linguistic diversity. At the same time, pressure from major regional languages such as Javanese and regional varieties of Malay, as well as the national language Indonesian, is leading to language shift away from many local varieties. Lewis et al. (2016) list 354 of these languages, nearly half the total number, as “in trouble”, “dying”, or “extinct”. In many cases, this is despite the language’s status as a symbol of cultural identity and a source of pride for its speakers. This talk will explore the interaction of language pride and language death in Indonesia, focusing particularly on the case of Wamesa, an endangered language with 6000 speakers in the Bird’s Head of West Papua, Indonesia and the subject of the author’s fieldwork.

**Emily Gasser** is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Swarthmore College. Her research centers around documentation of the Wamesa language, spoken in West Papua, Indonesia, as well as phonological and historical analysis of Wamesa and its Austronesian relatives. She received her doctorate from Yale University in 2014.

**All are welcome**

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