



Linguistic Society of America
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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Linguists to Gather in Pittsburgh for National Conference

(Washington, DC) – Hundreds of linguistic scholars from across the U.S. and around the world will convene in Pittsburgh for the 85th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) this January. Members of the news media are invited to observe and report on the proceedings.

The meeting is scheduled for January 6-9, 2011, at the Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown Hotel. The meeting provides a forum for the presentation of cutting-edge research focused on the scientific study of language. In addition to the LSA program, the meeting also features concurrent programs sponsored by the American Dialect Society, the American Name Society, the North American Association for the History of the Language Sciences, the Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics, and the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas.

The meeting typically attracts more than 1,000 linguists who attend various sessions and workshops. Approximately 220 papers and 80 posters have been approved for presentation at the meeting. For a detailed listing of all meeting sessions, please visit the LSA website: <http://www.lsadc.org/info/preliminary-program-2011.cfm>

Research Highlights

Symposium: Razing the standards: Building and implementing linguistically informed K-12 curriculum in a climate of ignorance

There are many reasons to teach young people about ways to engage in rational inquiry about language: It is a fundamental aspect of their humanity, it provides a wholly accessible “laboratory” for practicing a range of methods of inquiry, and it opens doors to insights in areas related to language, but typically studied without reference to systematic inquiry about it.

There is also overwhelming evidence that children have questions about language. There is outstanding work that brings the study of language into a variety of areas in K-12 classrooms,

from natural to social sciences, as well as into areas related to the study of literature, composition, and second language learning. However, recent proposed national standards in the U.S. do not take advantage of these rich resources of languages. The symposium describes a curriculum that is designed to prepare children to ask questions providing for sustained inquiry about language and to prepare teachers to encourage and respond to them.

Symposium: Presenting sign languages to the public

This symposium explores how research on sign languages can be better understood by various audiences: the hearing public; linguists studying spoken language; and Deaf audiences who are not linguists. The issue of how and why the findings of research projects on sign languages should be presented to these audiences will be explored. Research findings have informed spoken language studies in significant ways in the areas of gesture, bilingualism and language contact, first and second language acquisition, variation and the emergence of varieties of language. The challenge for sign language researchers is to think about how captions, voice-over, slow motion and careful explanation can be used effectively to make the information fully accessible and of interest to a hearing non-signing audience.

Symposium: Maps and map-making in linguistic research

Linguists have long mapped speaker locations, isoglosses, toponyms, and loci of sound changes, as well as historical migration paths and sites where inscriptions have been found. This session has a dual objective: to survey research which uses geolinguistic data and to introduce an online facility for viewing, creating, and combining GIS-based linguistics maps, the LL-MAP interface (<http://llmap.org>). LL-Map is designed to promote the use and creation of language maps, as well as the correlation of language information with data from the physical and social sciences.

Concurrent session: Narrative skills in boys with Down syndrome and fragile X syndrome

Boys with Down syndrome and fragile X syndrome were tested on their ability to tell a story using a standard test. This paper looks at the particular areas in which deficits are found, and suggests that both short-term memory and a theory of mind are important factors.

Concurrent session: Phonetic convergence among reality television contestants

On the reality television show Big Brother UK, contestants live in a closed system for three months, and are recorded 24 hours a day. Over that time period, contestants who interacted more and were part of the same 'social group' showed changes in their speech, coming to talk more like each other.

Symposium: Twenty Years of Documenting Endangered Languages

Twenty years ago, in a special session at the LSA, linguists raised a clarion call about language endangerment around the world, calling for intensive work on documentation of endangered languages. This call has led to a shift in the field, with increasing work on language documentation, an expanding awareness of the responsibilities of linguists to speech communities and enhanced collaborative work with those communities. The National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) initiative,

Documenting Endangered Languages, has been significant in fostering these developments. The talks in this session showcase the exciting research that has come about through the NSF/NEH initiative, focusing on geographical diversity and collaborative research, and, through a poster session, the power of the visual.

Awards, Honors and Related Events

In addition to the research presented, the meeting also features a number of awards, including the annual designation of the “Word of the Year” by the American Dialect Society, scheduled for Friday, January 7th. Other LSA awards to be presented at a special ceremony on January 8th at 5:30pm are the:

- Victoria A. Fromkin Lifetime Service Award: Donna Christian, (Center for Applied Linguistics);
- Linguistics, Language and the Public Award: North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad;
- Leonard Bloomfield Book Award: Hans Boas, *The Life and Death of Texas German*, published by Duke University Press for the American Dialect Society;
- Kenneth L. Hale Award: Nicholas Evans (Australian National University);
- Early Career Award: Andries W. Coetzee (University of Michigan);
- Student Abstract Award: Joshua Jensen (University of Texas at Arlington), Jason Grafmiller and Stephanie Shih (Stanford University), and Hannah Haynie (UC Berkeley).

The 2011 Class of LSA Fellows will be inducted during a ceremony at the Business Meeting, on Friday, January 7th at 5:30pm. Members of the Society who have made distinguished contributions to the discipline are honored with the fellow designation. Those being inducted are: Joseph E. Aoun, Mary Beckman, B Elan Dresher, Anthony Kroch, William Ladusaw, Diane Lillo-Martin, James McCloskey, and Carol A Padden.

Honorary members will also be elected at the Business Meeting.

To obtain a press badge for the meeting, please contact Alyson Reed.

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The Linguistic Society of America is the largest national professional society representing the field of linguistics. Its mission is to advance the scientific study of language.