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MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release

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Linguists to Gather in Portland for National Conference

(Washington, DC) – Hundreds of linguistic scholars from across the U.S. and around the world will convene in Portland, Oregon for the 86th 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 5-8, 2012, at the Hilton Portland & Executive Tower. 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/meet-annual.cfm>

Program Highlight

A screening of the film, **We Still Live Here – Âs Nutayuneân** is scheduled for Thursday, January 5th at 7:30pm. The film tells a remarkable story of cultural revival by the Wampanoag of Southeastern Massachusetts. Their ancestors ensured the survival of the first English settlers in America, and lived to regret it. Now they are bringing their language home again. One of the tribal linguistic scholars featured in the film, Jessie Little Doe Baird, will be available after the screening for Q&A.

The screening is free and open to the public. Meeting registration is not required. For more information about this film, please visit the producer's website at:

<http://www.makepeaceproductions.com/wampfilm.html>

Research Highlights

- Who Owns the Words? Three principles for protecting native speakers in the archival record. (Author: **Mary Walworth**)

It is a standard of language documentation efforts that linguistic records be made widely accessible. However in making language records more accessible, linguists may also be allowing access to "intangible cultural property": potentially sensitive cultural materials and important indigenous knowledge. Unfortunately, the current intellectual property framework contains no laws that protect intangible cultural property or dictate ownership of language related records. This situation presents a need for principles that extend beyond legal confines. In response to this need, this paper proposes three principles, founded in ethical understanding and indigenous community collaboration, to be made a standard of every language documentation project.

- Composite Dialect Models in Assessing African American English (Author: **Walt Wolfram**, North Carolina State)

This presentation argues for the research validity of overall dialect measures in describing vernacular dialects, notwithstanding the traditional resistance of linguists to such indices. Composite measures show, for example, how African American youth go through a roller coaster or curvilinear growth period in their use of African American English during childhood and early adolescence rather than a progressive slope, and indicate how dialect use correlates with the acquisition of literacy and with other educational skills. The presentation argues for a view of dialect that includes the sociolinguistic forest as well as the isolated, variable trees.

- Linguistic determinants of English personal name choice (Author: **Stephanie Shih**, Stanford University)

Previous studies have reported that a person's given name is determined by a multitude of social, cultural, economic, and historical factors. Using data from 41 million usernames on the popular social networking site Facebook, this study finds that people also have preferences for names with euphonic language patterns, including alliteration (Marilyn Monroe) and regular rhythm (Oprah Winfrey). Names with difficult sound sequences (Alice Smith) are commonly avoided. These same preferences for agreeable sound patterns have also been found by linguists to be at work more generally in speech.

- War, Language Endangerment, and Ex-Situ Documentation (Author: **Brent Henderson**, University of Florida)

Very little attention has been paid to war as a cause of language endangerment and death. Yet a survey of the world's 42 million displaced peoples reveals that many such groups originate

from linguistically diverse areas where often languages have only a few thousand speakers. While geographical shift often leads to eventual language shift, this does not make the tasks of language documentation and language support impossible. For example, Chimwiini speakers all originate from a small town of fifteen thousand in war-ravaged southern Somalia. Today, nearly all speakers live in refugee communities in major cities in the US, UK, and Kenya where language shift to English and Swahili are strongly underway. Nevertheless, strong language use remains at the household and community level and there is strong interest in language development. Statistics on war's effects on human geography, as well as the case study of Chimwiini, suggest that those interested in language documentation should look to major urban centers with large recent immigrant and refugee populations as potential fieldwork sites.

Awards, Honors and Related Events

In addition to the research and programmatic content 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 6th. Other LSA awards to be presented at a special ceremony on January 7th at 5:30pm are the:

- Linguistics, Language and the Public Award: **Leanne Hinton** (University of California, Berkeley, Emerita)
- Leonard Bloomfield Book Award: A Grammar of Creek (Muskogee), by **Jack B. Martin** (University of Nebraska Press, 2011)
- Kenneth L. Hale Award: **Nancy Dorian** (Bryn Mawr College, Emerita)
- Early Career Award: **Seth Cable** (University of Massachusetts Amherst)
- Linguistic Service Award: **Paul Newman** (Indiana University)
- Best Paper in Language 2011: presented jointly for "On the informativity of different measures of linguistic acceptability" (**Thomas Weskott** and **Gisbert Fanselow**) and "A test of the cognitive assumptions of magnitude estimation: Commutativity does not hold for acceptability judgments" (**Jon Sprouse**).
- Student Abstract Awards: **Jennifer Wilson**, University at Buffalo (first place); **M. Ryan Bochnak**, University of Chicago (second place); **Matthew Tucker**, University of California, Santa Cruz (third place).

The 2012 Class of LSA Fellows will be inducted during a ceremony at the Business Meeting, on Friday, January 6th 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: Penelope Eckert; Louis Goldstein; Jorge Hankamer; Irene Heim; Alice Harris; Angelika Kratzer; John J McCarthy; Richard Meier; Janet Pierrehumbert; and Elisabeth Selkirk. Honorary members of the LSA will also be elected at the Business Meeting.

To obtain a press badge for the meeting, please contact Alyson Reed (areed@lsadc.org)

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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.