![Linguistic Society of America logo - LSA]

Linguists Gather Virtually to Showcase Cutting-Edge Research

(Washington, DC) – Research presentations on topics as diverse as the history and development of African American Language, the linguistic nature of keysmashes, and the "myth" of Standard German dominance are among the highlights of the upcoming Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA), to be held virtually from January 7-10, 2021.

The 95th Annual Meeting of the LSA will attract over 1,000 linguistics scholars from across the US and around the world to a diverse array of online sessions. The meeting provides a forum for the presentation of cutting-edge research focused on the scientific study of language.

Members of the news media are invited to attend all or part of the meeting, which will be held virtually. Please contact Alyson Reed, Executive Director of the LSA (areed@lsadc.org) with any questions or to express your interest in attending. For more information, visit the Annual Meeting webpage at https://www.linguisticsociety.org/event/lsa-2021-annual-meeting or read through a selection of the meeting's highlights below.

Research Highlights

Over 120 papers and 180 research posters will be presented at the 2021 Annual Meeting, including the studies featured below:

Prosodic focus in human- versus voice-AI-directed speech
Eleonora Beier, Michelle Cohn, Fernanda Ferreira, Georgia Zellou

Millions of people now talk to voice activated artificially intelligent (voice-AI) assistants, like Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri in their everyday lives. Yet, we still don't fully understand how people talk to voice-AI versus real humans. This project tests how people emphasize parts of their sentence through prosody, by increasing their pitch, loudness, and duration; for example, saying "**Jade** saw the sun." emphasizes "Jade" while "Jade saw the **sun**." emphasizes "sun". We compare speech directed toward a human and an Amazon Alexa voice. Our results show that speakers use similar prosody to emphasize words for both human and voice-AI talkers; this suggests that speakers are applying speech behaviors from human-human interaction to voice-AI. Yet, there

are still nuanced differences for the two types of interlocutors, which suggests that speakers can change the way they use prosody to emphasize words based on their listener.

Insults on social media in public discussions about US political events
David Bowie and Kaitlyn Wolfe

Are political discussions on social media full of insults? Are Republicans or Democrats more abusive online? This study looks at the widespread idea that discussing politics on social media leads to increased use of abrasive or abusive language. We analyzed responses to several posts made by news media from across the political spectrum on Twitter and Facebook on both political and non-political topics for instances of strong, direct insults such as (italicized below, all other spelling and punctuation in the originals):

(1) The *son of a @$!#: vomit Russian traitor cat grabber incest animal* should just resign and send all his inhumane supporters to thousand hells
(2) Absolutely. These *trumpanzee dickheads* would be passing themselves with outage if the parties were reversed. That's how we know they are lawless and corrupt.
(3) Your the typical *uneducated hypocrite Demotard sheep*.

We found that direct insults are actually pretty rare in responses to news posts (1.5% of all analyzed responses contained an insult). However, political discussions contained a higher percentage of insults (1.6% vs. just 0.2%). We also found that men are more likely than women to post insults on social media (64.7% of all insults were posted by men), and left-leaning individuals and ideologies are more likely to be the targets of insults than those on the right (71.6% of all insults with a partisan target were directed toward the left).

Linguistic Measures of Symptomatology in Schizophrenia
Celia Metzger, Anya Hogoboom, Michael Covington, Michael T. Compton

Schizophrenia is a complex and stigmatized disorder. It affects people in many different ways and leads to a wide variety of symptoms, some of which hinder speech and language production or comprehension. While "disorganized speech" is among the diagnostic criteria for schizophrenia, the literature does not give a clear definition in terms of specific linguistic characteristics. To try to remedy this knowledge gap, our research analyzes the organization of speech by those with schizophrenia as compared to that of healthy volunteers. By comparing how these two groups describe the same picture, this research shows clear differences in the language patterns of patients and non-patients. This study demonstrates these differences by analyzing three main characteristics of speakers' discourse: (1) how they describe relationships ("There is a girl. There is an ice cream cone" vs. "The girl dropped her ice cream cone.") (2) the completeness of their picture descriptions, and (3) how they transition between topics in their speech (giving a list vs. linking with "and" vs. linking with positional information, i.e. "next to the girl is a boy").

That /s/ tiene *tumbao*: Exploring the Bilingual Dimensions of [s+] Production in Latinx Miami Drag
Christopher Mendoza

Many linguists have long been interested in what it means to "sound" gay. Much of this research has focused on descriptions of the "s" sound referred to in the media as the gay lisp, often linked to stereotypical perceptions of gay men as feminine. However, many of the participants included in studies about how speakers of different genders and sexual orientations produce this sound have been predominantly white. Utilizing the spoken data from 3 drag performers in the Wynwood art scene of Miami, I explore how Latinx drag provides alternative possibilities for what it means to construct a feminine queer voice. Interviews were conducted with the queens in both English and in Spanish on separate days while they were getting ready for a digital drag performance. I illuminate how makeup styles, hoop earrings, fashion choices and the local *chonga* persona of Miami provide context to how "sounding" gay (and Latinx) is directly tied to the choices we make in our visual presentations of self. The final data shows that speakers in the bicultural, bilingual space of Miami may have a more integrated sociophonetic system, producing the "s" sound similarly across languages, often also in a more retracted position than white queer speakers. I bring in queer of color criticism and theory to understand how the acoustic productions of Latinx drag queens reflect their navigation of mainstream gay white culture as well as their positionality at the racialized margins of queer life.

Bisexuality and /s/ production
Chloe Willis

What does it mean to sound bisexual? Research shows that people can identify someone's sexual orientation based on just their voice. However, most of this research focuses on stereotypes about gay men's speech, such as the "gay lisp", so we know very little about bisexuals. A new acoustic study suggests the pronunciation of S—the sound associated with the "gay lisp"—may be a key factor in sounding bisexual. The study reports that bisexual women produce S's that sound different compared to lesbian women, but not straight women. Specifically, bisexual women produce S with the tip of the tongue relatively close to the teeth (one of the factors that makes S sound "lispy"), whereas lesbian women produce S with the tongue farther away from the teeth. In addition, the study finds bisexual women and men produce S's that are about 10 milliseconds shorter than lesbian and gay speakers and 30 milliseconds shorter than straight speakers. These differences in the quality and the length of S are subtle, but previous research suggests that listeners are indeed able to hear them. The results of this study disrupt the notion that bisexuality is an amalgam of gayness and straightness and paint a picture of bisexual speech that is much more complex than previously thought.

hsdgkhsdjnf: On the Linguistic Nature of Keysmashes
Allison Park

A keysmash is a seemingly chaotic string of characters used in online discourse (e.g. "hsgkjsdnsdf"). Although they were named after smashing hands on a keyboard to create

nonsense, modern keysmashes are not random noise: these strings are used to express feelings or convey tone in some Internet subcultures. A survey tasked 1243 participants with judging whether keysmashes were "good" or well-formed both with and without context; judging whether keysmashes were meaningful (and what those meanings were) without context, and rating different social groups' likeliness to keysmash. Responses showed that keysmashes are meaningful, despite having random-seeming forms, and revealed strong judgments about how acceptable keysmashes are. Keysmashes behave like other human language and can be analyzed using tools familiar to the field of linguistics: they are far more than just random yelling on the internet.

Refuting Language Academies' Rejections of Non-Binary Grammatical Gender
Gabriella Licata and Benjamin Papadopoulos

Queer and nonbinary speakers around the world have created nonbinary forms of personal reference in masculine-feminine gendered languages in order to escape the violent cycle of being misgendered and misgendering others. However, Romance language academies, largely viewed as the "authorities" of the languages they govern, continue to passionately reject gender-inclusive language. As an example, l'Académie Française frames gender-inclusive forms as ''aberrations'' that threaten French cultural heritage and place the language in "mortal danger." While these academies justify their discriminatory practices by claiming the arbitrariness of masculine-feminine grammatical gender (a belief that many linguists continue to uphold), they themselves state that words with personal reference are grammatically gendered based on "biological sex" or "natural gender," thereby promoting transphobia and other forms of gender discrimination. In highlighting the discriminatory practices of the academies, we reveal the colonial and patriarchal structures of hegemonic power that underpin globally standardized language and the academies' ideologically-charged devaluations of speakers' access to adequate self-expression. Moreover, we refute the justifications present in their rejections by demonstrating how they are unsubstantiated by empirically-grounded sociolinguistic principles. We avidly call for Romance language academies to formally accept community-innovated gender-inclusive language given the societal influence they wield, and to recognize the importance of access to nonbinary forms of personal reference as a humanitarian issue.

A full schedule for the LSA Annual Meeting is available at:
https://www.linguisticsociety.org/node/34814/schedule

Program Highlights

The meeting will also feature special events such as a student panel on strategies for coping with the pandemic, a career mixer and career panel sponsored by the LSA's Linguistics Beyond Academia Special Interest Group, and presentation of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences' Talcott Parsons Prize to LSA Life Member and pioneering language variationist William Labov (University of Pennsylvania).

Awards, Honors and Related Events

The following awards will also be presented at a special ceremony on Wednesday. January 13

- **Linguistics, Language & The Public Award**: Gretchen McCulloch, Internet Linguist
- **Kenneth L**. **Hale Award**: Sharon Hargus, University of Washington
- **Leonard Bloomfield Book Award**: John H. Esling, Scott R. Moisik, Allison Benner and Lise Crevier-Buchmann, *Voice Quality: The Laryngeal Articulator Model* (Cambridge University Press)
- **Early Career Award**: Nicholas Henricksen, University of Michigan
- **Excellence in Community Linguistics Award**: Chikari Tisso, a native speaker and language activist of the Karbi language of Northeast India
- **Best Paper in *Language* Award**: Julie Anne Legate, Faruk Akkuş, Milena Šereikaitė, Donald Ringe (University of Pennsylvania), "On passives of passives." Volume 96. Number 4 (December 2020).
- **Student Abstract Awards**:
  - First place: Hironori Katsuda (University of Caifornia, Los Angeles) and Jeremy Steffman (Universtiy of California, Los Angeles): The role of segment and pitch accent in Japanese spoken word recognition.
  - Second place: Shannon Bryant (Harvard University): Evidence from Oromo on the typology of complementation strategies.
  - Third place: Maura O'Leary (University of California, Los Angeles) and Richard Stockwell (University of California, Los Angeles): Skills-based grading: a novel approach to teaching formal semantics.
- **Mentoring Award**: Donna Jo Napoli, Swarthmore College
- **Elizabeth Dayton Award**: Pocholo Umbal, University of Toronto

More information about LSA Honors and Awards can be found online:
http://www.linguisticsociety.org/about/who-we-are/lsa-awards

Members of the Society who have made distinguished contributions to the discipline will be inducted as LSA Fellows during a ceremony at the Business Meeting, on Friday, January 8th at 6:00 pm. The following members will be inducted in this year's class:

Mark Baker, Rutgers University
David Beaver, University of Texas at Austin
Megan Crowhurst, University of Texas at Austin
Coleen Fitzgerald, Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi
Ricardo Otheguy, The Graduate Center, CUNY
Sonja Lanehart, University of Arizona
Richard Larson, Stony Brook University
Anne Lobeck, Western Washington University
Graham Thurgood, California State University, Chico

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

Founded in 1924, 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.