



Linguistic Society of America

Linguistic Society of America
Archibald A Hill Suite
1325 18th Street, NW #211
Washington, DC 20036-6501

Phone: 202.835.1714
Fax: 202.835.1717
Email: lsa@lsadc.org
Web: www.lsadc.org

MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release

Contact: Brice Russ, LSA Director of Communications, bruss@lsadc.org

LSA Annual Meeting Brings World's Leading Linguists to Portland

(Washington, DC) – Research presentations on ‘creaky voice’ and cronuts, a film showing on *The Race To Save Cherokee*, and a Wikipedia ‘edit-a-thon’ are among the highlights of the upcoming Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA), to be held in Portland, Oregon from January 8-11, 2015.

The 89th Annual Meeting of the LSA will bring over 1,000 linguistics scholars from across the US and around the world to Portland. The meeting provides a forum for the presentation of cutting-edge research focused on the scientific study of language. 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, the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas, and The Association for Linguistic Evidence will be meeting concurrently with the LSA.

Members of the news media are invited to attend all or part of the meeting, which will be held at the Hilton Portland and Executive Tower. Please contact Brice Russ, LSA Director of Communications (bruss@lsadc.org) with any questions or to express your interest in attending.

For more information, visit the Annual Meeting webpage at <http://www.linguisticsociety.org/event/lsa-2015-annual-meeting> or read through some of the meeting's highlights below.

Program Highlights

In addition to the academic papers and posters which will be presented (see below), the 2015 LSA Annual Meeting will also feature:

- Two documentary film showings:
 - *First Language: The Race to Save Cherokee* (winner of the 2014 American Indian Film Festival's Best Public Service Film Award);
 - *The E-Word* (examining the debate over African American Vernacular English, commonly known as ‘Ebonics’);

- A PechaKucha-style blitz panel on “Popularizing Linguistics through Online Media”, featuring Ben Zimmer (*Wall Street Journal*), Gretchen McCulloch (*Slate*) and Arika Okrent (*Mental Floss*);
- A symposium on “Language Documentation in its Ethnographic Context”, organized jointly with the American Anthropological Association;
- Panels and workshops on linguists in industry and linguistic public outreach events;
- A Wikipedia ‘edit-a-thon’, bringing linguists together to improve the quality of linguistics articles on Wikipedia.

Research Highlights

Over 300 papers and 150 research posters will be presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting, including the studies featured below:

Gender Variation in the Pragmatic Uses of Twitter Hashtags Allison Shapp (NYU)

It seems like hashtags are everywhere these days, but you may not know how versatile their uses are on Twitter. Media reports and academic studies have focused on hashtags’ function as “Tags”—tracking topics, trends, events, businesses, or organizations. However, Allison Shapp, a sociolinguist at NYU, has found that hashtags are also used broadly for what she calls “Commentary”, and that which type of hashtag you use the most may depend on your gender.

Commentary hashtags are not intended to connect with a larger discussion and/or community; they are meant to be interpreted within the local context of the tweet. Commentary hashtags can express evaluation of what was said in the tweet (“30 minutes until lunch. #soexcited), or can be part of the main meaning (“Senior exit project. Microeconomics project. math final. #onlythingslefttodo.”)

Shapp took a random sample of men and women on Twitter and analyzed their uses of hashtags. Through a quantitative analysis, she found that men tend to use more Tag hashtags and women tend to use more Commentary hashtags ($p < .001$). These results support previous findings that people use language in patterned ways that correlate with their gender identity.

Langscape: Mapping Global Linguistic Diversity Colin Phillips and Tess Wood (University of Maryland)

Imagine you work for an aid organization which is dispatching workers to a remote region stricken by a disease outbreak or a typhoon. It is crucial to gain the trust of local communities - but how can you even be sure of what languages they speak?

Langscape is an interactive online map that allows people to discover the languages spoken at any point on the globe, and then to uncover resources for learning about them. Around 7,000 languages are spoken in the world today; Langscape allows users to explore the linguistic landscape worldwide, whether their goal is to identify valuable language resources in an emergency, to infuse language diversity into the K-12 curriculum, or to raise awareness of minority and endangered languages around the world.

Aspects of Creaky Voice (session)

Organizer: Irene Vogel (University of Delaware), with 14 additional presenters

“Creaky voice” or “vocal fry” has recently received attention in the media as a relatively new development in the speech of younger, typically female, speakers of American English. This Special Session presents rigorous research, rather than subjective assessments, regarding this phenomenon. Specifically, papers and posters address issues of how “creaky voice” is actually distributed in the US population, how it is acquired by young children and attitudes towards its use.

In addition, research is presented on the use of similar voice or phonation properties in a variety of other languages, as well as the articulatory and acoustic properties of the phenomenon and challenges for measuring it, including the presentation of an innovative speech analysis program that addresses some of these challenges.

The peril of sounding manly: A look at vocal characteristics of lawyers before the United States Supreme Court

Alan Yu, Katie Franich, Jacob Phillips, Betsy Pillion (University of Chicago), Daniel Chen (Zurich University), Yosh Halberstam (University of Toronto)

Do vocal characteristics and how they are perceptually evaluated have an influence on listener behavior? In this study, Alan Yu et al. examine the vocal characteristics of lawyers arguing in front of the Supreme Court of the United States and link this data to the lawyers’ actual win rates in the Court.

They show that perceived attributes of voices, such as degree of perceived vocal masculinity, predict Supreme Court wins. While the mechanism behind such an effect is still under investigation, the results offer an illustrative example of the potential power of linguistically-based evaluative judgments in real world situations.

Quantifying cronuts: Predicting the quality of blends

Constantine Lignos and Hilary Prichard (University of Pennsylvania)

Why does “frenemy” sound better than “framily”? These innovative words, known as blends, are popular examples of the kind of wordplay people engage in every day. New research by Constantine Lignos and Hilary Prichard examines what makes a blend catchy.

The authors compiled a list of good and bad blends from social media, television, and marketing campaigns, and asked people to rate them. These ratings were used to teach a computer program to automatically score blends. This “blendometer” learned to imitate human preferences by “autocompleting” each half of the blend, guessing the most popular word that starts or ends the same way. This method predicts that the easy-to-complete blends “chillax” and “sharknado” are among the best, while “cronut” leaves something to be desired.

Multisyllabic Rhyme in Contemporary American Hip Hop

Samantha Cornelius (University of Texas – Arlington)

In the majority of English poetry and music, we rhyme the last syllables of lines. However, in American Hip Hop, musical artists can create rhymes that use 2, 3, 4 and 5 syllables. This presentation shows how rappers rely on near-rhymes, which they create by manipulating various features of the individual

sounds, to create these large rhyme domains. Additionally, they can add and delete vowels, consonants, and even syllables to create as large a domain as possible while still maintaining the similarity necessary for rhyme.

Boston Strong: South Boston dialect features across 70 years of apparent time
James Stanford and Kelsey Sipple (University of Dartmouth)

Despite its role as the historical “hub” of the large Eastern New England (ENE) speech community, the Boston dialect remains understudied in acoustic sociophonetics. Stanford et al.’s study involved 18 undergraduate Dartmouth students who made field recordings in South Boston (“Southie”), a historically working-class neighborhood known for its traditional Eastern New England dialect features. The study examined whether these dialect features are still strong in Southie, and more generally, what can be learned about the relationship between a speech community and its hub.

The results show that some features are receding among younger speakers, but many features, such as “r-less” speech, remain strong in this community. This result contrasts with recent work in northern New England where traditional dialect features are rapidly receding. Stanford et al.’s ethnographic research suggests that the difference may be due to Southie’s strong “hub identity” in the face of immigration and cultural contact.

A full schedule for the LSA Annual Meeting is available at <http://www.linguisticsociety.org/event/lsa-2015-annual-meeting/schedule>.

Awards, Honors and Related Events

The LSA Annual 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 9th. The following awards will also be presented at a special ceremony on Saturday, January 10th:

- **Leonard Bloomfield Book Award:** *The Oxford Reference Guide to English Morphology* (Oxford University Press, 2013), authored by Laurie Bauer (Victoria University), Rochelle Lieber (University of New Hampshire), and Ingo Plag (University of Düsseldorf)
- **Early Career Award:** Lev Michael (UC – Berkeley)
- **Linguistic Service Award:** Jim Bauman (Center for Applied Linguistics, retired)
- **Best Paper in Language Award:** “Asymmetries in the prosodic phrasing of function words: Another look at the suffixing preference”, authored by Nikolaus P. Himmelmann (University of Cologne)
- **Student Abstract Awards:**
 - 1st place: Jason Zentz (Yale University)
 - 2nd place: Danielle Barth (University of Oregon)
 - 3rd place: Bryan Rosen (UW – Madison)

The LSA will also present the first ever **Linguistics Journalism Award** to Ben Zimmer. The *Kenneth L. Hale Award* (Anvita Abbi, Jawaharlal Nehru University) and *Excellence in Community Linguistics Award* (Muriel Fisher, Isle of Skye) will be announced at the Annual Meeting, but presented elsewhere.

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 9th at 6:30pm. The following members will be inducted in this year's class:

- John Baugh (Washington University in St. Louis)
- Lyle Campbell (University of Hawai'i)
- Andries Coetzee (University of Michigan)
- C.-T. James Huang (Harvard University)
- Patricia Keating (University of California (Los Angeles))
- Donna Jo Napoli (Swarthmore College)
- Robin Queen (University of Michigan)
- Bernard Spolsky (Bar-Ilan University, Emeritus)
- Donca Steriade (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
- Thomas Wasow (Stanford University)

Honorary members of the LSA will also be elected at the Business Meeting.

To obtain a press badge for the meeting, please contact Brice Russ (bruss@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.