

"Workshop on sociolinguistic language documentation in Sub-Saharan Africa"

Workshop on sociolinguistic language documentation in Sub-Saharan Africa to be held in conjunction with the Seventh World Congress of African Linguistics

University of Buea, Cameroon
17–19 August 2012

Statement of interest deadline: 20 April 2012

Workshop rationale

Language documentation is prototypically characterized as the collection of records of a language which can form the basis of traditional descriptive linguistic products such as lexicons, grammars, and texts. This follows from an emphasis by linguists and speaker communities on documentation of specific varieties and genres taken to be especially representative of a given community's heritage.

By contrast, relatively little attention has been paid to understanding what kinds of documentary products are required to adequately capture the sociolinguistic setting of a language. This represents a particularly complex issue in the highly multilingual contexts that typically characterize Sub-Saharan Africa.

The guiding concern of this workshop is understanding how we can adequately document the sociolinguistic contexts of Sub-Saharan African languages. It will address questions such as the following: Are particular discourse genres especially revealing of sociolinguistic dynamics? How can multilingual competence be rigorously assessed? Can we establish general methods to discover salient markers of sociolinguistic significance? What additional kinds of metadata are needed to facilitate the testing of sociolinguistic hypotheses on documentary data?

The workshop is designed to produce new research collaborations among scholars of African languages. Significant time will be devoted to working groups where participants will divide into sub-groups to discuss specific issues related to the sociolinguistic documentation of Sub-Saharan African languages and draft reports proposing future documentary agendas. We especially encourage the participation of junior scholars, including advanced students.

Date and location

The workshop will take place at the University of Buea, Cameroon, 17–19 August, 2012, immediately before the Seventh World Congress of African Linguistics (WOCAL7), scheduled for 20–24 August, 2012.

Funding availability

The workshop organizers anticipate being able to make significant contributions to the travel costs for around five U.S. participants and ten African participants. Scholars from other countries are also strongly encouraged to participate, as are scholars with access to other travel funds.

Call for statements of interest

Those interested in participating in the workshop should prepare a one-page statement of interest including the following information:

- Name of participant, academic affiliation, and research qualifications and background.
- Reason for interest in the workshop, including some indication of the specific issues of sociolinguistic language documentation that it is hoped the workshop will address.
- Whether they are requesting funding for travel to the workshop; if so, a separate page should be included with their interest statement giving an estimate of travel expenses and an indication of what other sources of funding (if any) may be available to support their participation.
- Junior applicants (especially students) should also provide the name and contact details (email and telephone number) of at least two referees to vouch for their application.

Applicants should bear in mind that the workshop is specifically intended to foster new research collaborations. Therefore, statements of interest should not consist merely of project reports but rather give clear reasons for participation in workshop discussions. They should address, for example, questions like: What are the key research issues in African sociolinguistics today? What kinds of collaborative research projects can address those issues? Or, how can new collaborative efforts be encouraged?

Planned workshop topics

While the workshop topics are not fixed, we anticipate that the discussion will focus on the following issues. We encourage those interested in participating to discuss in their statements of interest which of the following questions they would like to consider at the workshop. We welcome suggestions for additional topics.

- How can contemporary sociolinguistic theories inform language documentation agendas in Africa?
- What is the nature of the sociolinguistic contexts of Sub-Saharan African languages?

- What documentary products can form the basis of an adequate sociolinguistic documentation?
- How do we achieve effective sociolinguistic documentation in African field settings?
- What are the community roles and ethical issues in sociolinguistic documentation? What is the nature, role, and value of collaboration?
- How should researchers of African languages be trained in sociolinguistic language documentation?

Submitting a statement of interest

One page statements of interest (accompanied by an additional page containing budgetary information and a reference, if relevant) must be submitted by 20 April 2012. They should be submitted via LINGUIST List's Easy Abs service at the following address: <http://linguistlist.org/confcustom/AfricaSocioling>

The workshop is being organized by Tucker Childs (childst@pdx.edu) and Jeff Good (jcgood@buffalo.edu), with financial support anticipated from the U.S. National Science Foundation. General questions about the workshop should be directed to the workshop email address: africansociolinguistics@gmail.com.

Additional information will be posted at <http://buffalo.edu/~jcgood/AfricanSociolinguistics.html> as it becomes available.