THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS

*** SSILA BULLETIN ***

An Information Service for SSILA Members

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23.0 RE: SAN DIEGO MEETING PROGRAM

The Program Committee for the SSILA Annual Meeting (San Diego, Jan. 4-7, 1996) has submitted a preliminary program to the LSA Secretariat. Some adjustments to the schedule may have to be made to avoid conflicts with LSA Sessions, but we hope to be able to distribute the program next week in a special SSILA Bulletin. Nearly all of the abstracts that we found acceptable, and the LSA was able to accommodate eight SSILA sessions, with nearly 70 papers. —VO

23.1 MIXE-ZOQUEAN/ZAPOTECAN DOCUMENTATION PROJECT SEeks LINGUISTS

The Project for the Documentation of the Mixe-Zoquean and Zapotecan Languages (Terry Kaufman and John Justeson, Principal Investigators) was established three years ago with funding from the National Geographic Society. It is now expanded to include the quality and coverage of the documentation of the Mixe-Zoquean and Zapotecan languages, to make progress with the research on Proto Mixe-Zoquean and Proto Zapotecan, and to foster the development of a group of scholars with shared knowledge and resources. Further goals include applying the results of reconstruction to the decipherment of the Zapotec and Mixe-Zoquean hieroglyphic writing, and the decipherment of Zapotec (or Oaxacan) hieroglyphic writing. By June 1999, Project 1 of the Mixe-Zoquean languages will be completed, as will all of the Zapotecan languages that provide the raw materials for evidence for phonological and morphosyntactic reconstruction. All linguistic material collected by the Project will be databased for correction and eventual distribution to interested parties during and immediately after the term of the project.

In preparation for its two final field seasons, the Project is seeking ten linguists to work on the documentation of Mixe-Zoquean and Zapotecan Languages. The project has been in progress since the summer of 1996 and/or the summer of 1997 (a 2-month commitment each summer). At least six other linguists will be continuing work on languages they have worked on in previous seasons. The Americanist linguists currently on the team include Terry Kaufman, Roberto Zavala, Rich Rivière, Thom Smith-Stark, and Jim Fox.

The Project seeks linguists who have doctorates or whose graduate training is in an advanced stage. Participating linguists will need a background in typological linguistics, especially articulatory phonetics, phonemic analysis, and morphology. A strong interest in theoretical and formal linguistics neither contributes to nor detracts from the aims of the Project, but it will substitute for competence in phonetic transcription and morphological analysis. Certain theoretical issues may be focused on in the special session held by mutual agreement.

These languages are phonologically difficult. The Zapotecan languages have tonal systems with three or four contrasts, and sometimes have consonantal phonation. Mixe can have syllables packed with features such as glottalization, vowel length, glottal stop, and pre- or post-consonantals. Potential participants must be fully prepared to deal with complex phonetic complexities.

Participating linguists must have an ability to work in Spanish. While their speed of delivery and vocabulary size can be below fluency level, they must be able to speak clearly and accurately, and be able to formulate complex sentences for grammatical elicitation with a minimum of preparation. An independent evaluation of the Spanish competence of prospective participants will be needed.

All expenses of the work of the linguists will be covered by the Project: travel, room & board, as well as compensation for consultants. None of
the linguists (including the PIs) will receive a salary. All results of the research will belong to the Project, although participating linguists may retain a copy of the work they have produced, and may also release their material to other participating linguists.

Work will be conducted from a single research center, either in Catezaco, Veracruz (the site of the 1999 work), or in a small town in the Valley of Oaxaca. The Project will occupy a block of rooms in a hotel, or rent a house for the purpose. The work will begin on June 8 and continue through August 5. Returning linguists need not begin work precisely on June 8, but they need to be on site by that date. The first few days of the season will be devoted to orienting the participating linguists toward working on Mixe-Zoquean or Zapotecan languages, as relevant.

Participants will be chosen on the basis of their qualifications for accomplishing the work that needs to be done, and on the PIs’ evaluation of how well they will do the work. Linguists from outside the US and Mexico are invited to apply, but the Project cannot cover the expenses of nationals in obtaining or renewing Mexican visas.

The make-up of the 1996 field team will be decided by the end of the second week of January, 1996. Interested linguists should communicate with the Project as soon as possible if needed, prospective participants can be interviewed during the LAA/SILIA meetings in San Diego, January 4-7.

The Project is also seeking a Field Administrator. Competence in English and Spanish (ideally, both oral and written) is required, as is fluency in Spanish. The administrator’s job involves keeping accounts, paying salaries, booking reservations, photographing and copying tapes, and helping linguists and interpreters with their work, assisting linguists with database problems. Familiarity with computer databases (especially Access or Microsoft Access) is required. The administrator is responsible for managing all data collection, database management, and data analysis.

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23.2 ENGLISH-ONLY LEGISLATION THREATENS INDIAN LANGUAGE FUNDING

[The following report (another version of which was posted recently on the Endangered Languages List) is from James Crawford, an independent writer who lives in Washington, DC. Jim, who was formerly Washington editor of Survival, has been writing about bilingual education and the politics of language for about 10 years. His most recent book, Hold Your Tongue and Language Loyalties: A Source Book on the Official English Controversy (University of Chicago Press), published in 1999, deals in detail with the English-only phenomenon and related issues. He is currently working on endangered Native American languages and efforts to preserve them, and last year joined SILIA.)

I am sorry to report that several, if not yet all, versions of English-only legislation now pending in Congress would prohibit any federal funding to preserve Native American languages. Programs in jeopardy include those supported by section 508 of the Native American Languages Act, the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Park Service, and, of course, the Bilingual Education Act.

Unlike all but one of the 20 state laws making English official (Arizona's is the exception; fortunately it has been ruled unconstitutional), the federal laws have very sharp teeth. They would impose a strict English-only policy, with only narrow exceptions.

The most liberal proposal, H.R. 123, once exempted federal actions, documents, and activities that are purely informational or educational, 'but in the hands of the 104th Congress, this loophole has narrowed to include merely the taking of copies of public languages. The only other exceptions are for international trade, public health, criminal proceedings, and "terms of art" borrowed from languages other than English. The bill also invites lawsuits by "any person alleging injury arising from a violation" of the English-only actions, i.e., any taxpayer who objected to funds going to minority language programs.

The more draconian bills, H.R. 739 and H.R. 1005, have fewer exemptions and restrictions. The Bilingual Education Act, bilingual voting rights, and similar programs, for example, are - to me it is unclear, however, whether their effect would be significantly harsher than H.R. 123. The major difference would be that H.R. 123 would require more interpretation and UIU litigation to determine which programs pass the test. Services, documents, actions, and activities would be affected. Bear in mind that I’m not a lawyer, but to me the prohibitions look extremely broad. If enacted, H.R. 123 would probably preclude older laws already on the books, potentially including the Native American Languages Act.

To be sure, Native American languages are not a major target of the English-only lobby. The main lobbying group behind H.R. 123, continues to direct its fire mostly against immigrants. Back in the mid-1980s, Michael Krauss convinced that Native American languages are at risk. U.S. English adopted a position paper saying Indians don't have to assimilate as long as they stay on reservations (though if they do they'd be subject to the same structures as immigrants). It's not clear whether U.S. English still holds this position or whether its current leadership is aware of its. Those who negotiated with Mike are long gone.

*English First*, the smaller and more rightist lobby that backs H.R. 739 and H.R. 1005, has made a point of attacking the Native American Languages Act and greatly exaggerating its cost (as I learned when debating one of
their leaders on the radio not long ago). So it's unlikely that Native American language programs will continue to operate much longer in obscurity, as the English-only bills start to move.

That will happen soon in the House, where the Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee has scheduled hearings on this legislation for October 18 and November 1. No word yet on the witness list. I hope we'll hear that numerous people working to preserve endangered languages — linguists, educators, activists, Indian activists, etc. — will seek to testify. I'm told that the LSA is very interested in testifying, but whether that will be allowed remains to be seen. I'll keep SSILA posted as I learn more.

No Senate hearings have been scheduled thus far. But with Senator Dole hopping on the bandwagon, they're a lot more likely to occur. If there's any English-only legislation, it will be there, since a few influential Republicans from the West (Sens. Hatch, McCain, and Domenici in particular) have strongly opposed it in the past. The House may already be a lost cause, now that H.R.122 has 182 co-sponsors and strong support from New Gingrich and his allies. As for the President, we must remember that Clinton once signed an official English bill; it was the Arkansas.gov campaign, during the 1992 campaign, he caved to Hispanic supporters that that might have been a mistake and he pledged not to repeat it. But with Clinton, you never know.

Unfortunately there is today no well-organized opposition to English-only activity, such as existed 5 to 10 years ago. There are a number of local coalitions, but the Washington representatives of Hispanic, Asian, Jewish, language activists, and civil libertarian groups no longer meet formally to plot strategy.

Still, there have been some cooperative efforts around a counter-measure known as the English Plus resolution (H. Con. Res. 83), sponsored by Rep. José Serrano (D-N.Y.) and about 30 others. This non-binding "sense of Congress" bill argues that language diversity is a good thing for the country and that Congress should promote rather than repress it. It also suggests that any program be fair to all groups and not infringe on the rights of any other language. It's a step in the right direction, and it will be necessary to move on if this legislation is passed.

The authors of the English Plus resolution are meeting next week to assemble a list of witnesses for the House hearings.

—Jim Crawford

23.3 BLS-22 SESSION ON HISTORICAL ISSUES IN NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES

The 2nd annual meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society will be held February 16-18, 1995. The conference will consist of a plenary session covering all areas of linguistic interest, and a symposium on the role of language change and typological theory. On the day preceding the regular meeting—February 16—there will also be a special session on historical issues in Native American Languages. Invited speakers for this session are: Scott DeForest (U of Oregon), Margaret Landon (UCSD), and Laurel Watkins (Colorado College).

Abstracts are invited for all three sessions. Papers presented at the conference will be published in the society's proceedings, and authors who present papers agree to provide camera-ready copy of their papers (not more than 12 pages) by May 15, 1995. Speakers will be allotted 20 minutes with 10 minutes for questions. BLS asks that the abstract be as specific as possible, including a statement of the topic or problem, approach, and the conclusions.

To submit an abstract, send 10 copies of an anonymous one-page (8 1/2 x 11, unредuced) abstract. A second page, or reverse side of the single page, may be used for data and references only. Along with the abstract send a 3 x 5 card listing: (1) paper title; (2) session/submission (general session, special session, or special session); (3) for general session abstracts only, subject area(s); (4) discursive analysis, historical linguistics, morphometry, philosophy and methodology of linguistics, phonetics/phonology, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, or syntax/semantics; (5) author's name(s); (6) address where notification of acceptance or rejection should be mailed; (7) author's affiliation; and (8) author's e-mail address, if available. In case of joint authorship, each author should be designated for communication with BLS.

Send abstracts to: BLS-22 Abstract Committees, 2337 Dwinelle Hall, UC-Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720.

Abstracts for the general session and parasession must be received by 12:00 p.m., November 10, 1994. Special session abstracts must be received by November 7, 1995. Inquiries of a general nature may be sent by e-mail to gis@kernet.berkeley.edu; however, BLS cannot accept e-mail or faxed submission of abstracts.

Registration fees: before February 7, 1995 - $10 students, $15 non-students; after February 7, 1995 - $20 students, $25 non-students.

23.4 CORRESPONDENCE

Chankanak Weeras 
>From Chuck Coker (indianappr@iol.com) Sept. 15, 1995:

Computers have become a fact of life in most places (at least, most of the places I have been familiar with). I have become curious about how different languages deal with computer words. Have new "native" words been created in other languages, or are loanwords used?

I'm currently living on the Hualapai Indian Reservation in Arizona. In Hualapai (Hualapai, Hualapai), there are two native words for _computer_:

qambayu:k
place to store brains [qambay = brain + bu:k = to store]
(= plural suffix) + o = (locative suffix)

qambay;igawu:k
place to put away brains [qambay = brain + igaw = to put away] + j = (plural suffix) + o = locative suffix]

Can anyone provide the word _computer_ from other languages, along with literal meanings and etymologies if possible? Any other computer-related words would be welcome, too.

—Chuck Coker

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"Iroquois Longhouse"

>From Sharon Steinberg (ssteinberg@rc.com) Sept. 19, 1995:

Does anyone have access to a translation and/or a transcription of 'Iroquois Longhouse,' from 'How the West Was Lost,' Vol 2, sung by Joanne Shenandoah? I can't get the song out of my head, but I don't know what it means. Thanks!

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THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS

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