

Introduction to a special issue of SLS: The proceedings of ILLS 1: LOL

Matt Garley and Benjamin Slade
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
mgarley2@illinois.edu, bslade@illinois.edu

1. About ILLS

Illinois Language and Linguistics Society 1 (ILLS 1) was the inaugural meeting of an annual student-organized linguistics conference in at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Taking a cue from long-established student-organized conferences like the Symposium About Language and Society-Austin and the Chicago Linguistic Society, and with the support and ideas of other members of the University of Illinois Linguistics Student Organization, we began discussing the possibility of a student conference in Spring 2007. From May 29-31, 2009, our plans became a reality, bringing top-notch guest speakers to our campus, providing a venue for the presentation of the research going on at the University of Illinois and elsewhere, and affording us and the conference committee members extensive experience in reviewing and conference organizing. ILLS' central idea is that of a student-organized, student-run conference in general linguistics with a special topic which changes from year to year, according to the interests of the volunteer conference organizers.

The realization of the ILLS conference was not accomplished alone; we partnered with the Linguistics Student Organization and the Department of Linguistics for primary financial and logistical support. In addition, the professional contributions of Applied Technologies for Learning in the Arts and Sciences (ATLAS) were key—because of ATLAS' generous contribution of their time and resources, we were not only able to stream the conference live online, but we now have a professional-quality video record of the talks, which remains available online.¹ We would also be remiss to neglect the financial contributions of our other sponsors: the Cognitive Science/Artificial Intelligence Working Group, the European Union Center and the US Department of Education Title VI grant, the Department of Psychology, the Dynamics of Language and Contact Reading Group, the Department of French, the Illini Union Bookstore, and the Program in Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Illinois.

¹ http://ills.linguistics.illinois.edu/prev/08_09/videos.html (19 December 2009)

In addition, the conference committee deserves recognition for their efforts before and during the conference in running the registration table, providing food, introducing the speakers, and a litany of other tasks which, in sum, contributed greatly to the smooth operation of an unprecedented conference: Amanda Huensch, Erin Rusaw, Zak Hulstrom, Adriana Molina Muñoz, Karen Lichtman, Liam Moran, Lisa Pierce, Eunah Kim, Soondo Baek, Jill Hallett, and Nikos Vergis.

Our sincere appreciation goes out to our invited speakers, for taking a chance on a small, inaugural student conference: Richard Hallett, Susan Herring, Theresa Heyd, Alexandra Georgakopoulou, and Randall Sadler, who also served as the conference's faculty advisor. Finally, the student presenters were key to the success of this conference: the high quality of the presentations reflects well (and due to ATLAS' efforts, will continue to reflect well) on the next generation of linguists.

2. Contents of this special issue

The recordings made at the conference are not the only permanent record of the work presented at ILLS 1. A number of graduate students agreed to submit their research to Studies in the Linguistic Sciences for the conference proceedings, and we would like to thank all of the contributors for their patience with the review process, their willingness to work under tight schedules, and their contribution of excellent work to our department's working papers. The special topic for ILLS 1 was 'Language Online', and four of the six papers included here deal with aspects of this topic.

The issue opens with Jennifer Cramer's 'Using pronouns to construct a European identity: The case of politicians at Davos 2008', in which she capitalizes on attendees' pronoun use at the 2008 World Economic Forum to reveal national identities, underlining the link between pronoun use and ideology.

The second paper included here is Craig Dennis Howard's 'Part of speech tagged asynchronous CMC: Comparing native, non-native, and newspaper English', which engages with the special topic of 'Language Online', using techniques from the field of corpus linguistics to investigate language learners' online use of English by comparison with language teachers' use and a news corpus.

Josh Iorio's 'Effects of audience on orthographic variation', the third paper in the special issue, addresses style-shifting in an online game,

operationalizing a number of novel variables in a ‘demographically lean’ online community in a new take on standard variationist approaches to sociolinguistics.

The fourth contribution, ‘IM conversations in Spanish: written or oral discourse?’, from Yolanda Pangtay-Chang, takes up a classic thread of research on computer-mediated-communication (CMC), examining instant messaging conversations in Spanish with regard to features of spoken and written language.

Chaehee Park’s ‘Language styles of Korean in chat-rooms’ discusses the orthographic representation of pronunciation in Korean chat-rooms. Cataloging a number of features shared by an online speech community, Park inventories vowel and consonant changes based in spoken language style, but represented in Hangul orthography online.

The sixth and final paper in the collection is Eman Saadah’s ‘Telephone openings in Arabic’, a conversation-analytic approach to standard greetings in Arabic telephone conversations. With great attention to detail, the study discusses some of the similarities and differences of Arabic telephone openings to those common in other cultures.

Please enjoy this special issue of SLS, and if it should interest you, please learn more about the upcoming ILLS 2.² We look forward to another successful conference in 2010!

² <http://ills.linguistics.illinois.edu>