Workshop ID: 40
Workshop Duration: Workshop - 2 Days
Workshop Title: African Youth Language
Workshop Leader: Ellen Hurst, University of Cape Town

This workshop will build on recent developments in African sociolinguistics by bringing together scholars working on various forms of youth language relevant to the African continent. For example, a burgeoning area of current sociolinguistics research explores what are known as AUYLs (African Urban Youth Languages) such as Sheng from Kenya, Tsotsitaal from South Africa, Camfranglais from Cameroon and Nouchi from Ivory Coast. These phenomena are variously described as emerging vernaculars (McLaughlin 2009: 9), new languages (Kioko 2015: 125), antilanguages (Kiessling and Mous 2004), and styles or registers of African languages (Hurst and Mesthrie 2013). This field of research has important implications for language change in African contexts. These language forms are also often linked to other related semiotic practices such as gesture (Brookes 2004), performance and sub-cultural styles (Hurst 2009), music (Inyabri 2016), performance poetry (Nopece forthcoming) and so on. There is also an expanding literature on the use of youth language in social media and digital communications throughout the African continent. Additionally, papers will be welcomed on other types of youth language and styles, such as ludlings, gang registers/argots and secret languages, and gendered language styles such as those spoken within LGBT communities.

The workshop hopes to cover different aspects of youth linguistic performance in Africa, such as the linguistic features of youth language(s) and their impact on language change; particular linguistic and discourse features such as metaphor, semantic shift, phonological and syntactic features amongst youth; multilingual practices in linguistically diverse urban centres; rural youth language practices; youth language in the African diaspora; global influences on African youth language practices and vice versa; youth culture and language in Africa (e.g hip hop, social media, performance poetry etc.); gesture and youth language; theoretical framings of youth language practice; and methodological considerations in youth language research.

Selected References:

