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UCT to host Africa's first urban and youth language conference

5 & 6 July 2013, Lady Hamilton Hotel, Cape Town

- **Presentations will be delivered on youth languages from around Africa.**
- **A special panel will discuss South African Tsotsitaal.**
- **UCT language and linguistics experts Dr Tessa Dowling, Dr Ellen Hurst and Professor Raj Mesthrie will present topical papers on current language research.**
- **Keynote addresses by:**
 - **Samy Alim**, an Associate Professor at Stanford University (USA), on language, literacy and youth culture, particularly the hip hop culture, and on critical language awareness for socially-marginalised and linguistically-profiled populations.
 - **Peter Githinji**, an Associate Professor at Ohio University (USA), who has published various articles on Kenyan Sheng, an urban vernacular.
- **Hip hop performances by Amathongo and the UCT Hip Hop Club**

The University of Cape Town will host the first ever African Urban and Youth Language Conference, where leading scholars from around the world will discuss language variation and change. Organised by Dr Ellen Hurst, a lecturer and researcher in UCT's Humanities Education Development Unit, the conference will be held on Friday and Saturday, 5 and 6 July 2013, at the Lady Hamilton Hotel, Cape Town.

Tsotsitaal will be one of the topics at the conference where language experts from around Africa will share their knowledge and research. African urban and youth language varieties provide striking examples of mixing, coinages, syntactic change, lexical innovation and other dynamic language phenomena.

"Internationally, there has been a recent increase in interest in youth and urban language phenomena. Youth and urban languages are seen to be at the heart of language change in postmodern societies, and a feature of contemporary diversity in our cities," says Dr Hurst.

Other interesting conference topics include:

Princess Bembe (PhD student in Linguistics, UCT) will talk about a subcultural group

in Kwa-Thema, Johannesburg, who call themselves "Pexars". They are extravagant in their clothing and lifestyle, and use mainly the language variety, Is'camtho, with a slight "twist" which they claim is influenced by Is'tariana (a broken version of Italian). Her research additionally features a juxtaposition of two youth groups: those who attend ex-model C schools, use English and reside in townships; and those youth who reside in townships and attend township schools.

Roland Raoul Kouassi, Alain Laurent Aboa (both from the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Ivory Coast) and Jeffrey Heath (University of Michigan, USA) will discuss Nouchi (aka Noussi), an urban lingua franca that initially developed among ghetto youth of several ethnicities in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in the mid 1970s. Research by Kouassi, Aboa and Heath outlines a plan for the documentation and preservation of samples of Nouchi speech and music. This plan also includes the recording of interviews about the cultural status of Nouchi, which will be disseminated later in written and multimedia form to academic and popular audiences.

Hilde Gunnink (Ghent University, Belgium) will discuss the differences between the grammar of Tsotsitaal and the grammar of other languages spoken in urban areas. In this way Gunnink will highlight the grammatical properties that are unique to the grammar of Tsotsitaal. Elsewhere in the programme **Nosipho Makhanya (University of KwaZulu-Natal)** will touch on the status of Tsotsitaal in Durban and its urban townships as the language of the youngsters.

Stefano Manfredi (Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", Italy) and Christophe Pereira (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, France) will talk about their research on the sociolinguistic backgrounds and linguistic features of a number of Arabic youth languages spoken in Africa.

Heather Brookes (Schools Development Unit, UCT) and Tebogo Maribe (MA student in Linguistics, UCT) will explore the nature and social meanings of gestural styles among black male youth in a Johannesburg township. Brookes and Maribe found that gesturing was most elaborated in the communication of male youth in their teens and twenties when they gather together on their local townships' or neighbourhoods' street corners.

Media Alert: For media accreditation and interviews with speakers please contact Kemantha Govender at tel: 021 650 5672, 084 737 6522 or kemantha.govender@uct.ac.za.

For more information on the African Urban and Youth Language Conference visit www.auyl2013.co.za.

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