**The Linguistic Anthropology Workshop Presents**

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**Monday December 5th, 2016, 12:30pm - 2:00pm**

**Social Science Research Building 340 - Linguistic Anthropology Lab**

***Language ideologies about the uses of an emerging sign language in the San Juan Quiahije Chatino municipality***

This talk addresses the relationship between communicative practices and sign language ideologies in six extended families of deaf people, and reflects on the linguistic status of their sign language through the perspectives of the families. The author conducted an ethnography on the formation of a recently identified emerging village sign language, San Juan Quiahije Chatino Sign Language (SJQCSL) and a signing community in the SJQ municipality (Hou, 2016). Part of the ethnography consisted of examining the daily communicative practices in the signing families and their language ideologies about communicative accommodation, language development, and form and function of sign language.

The usage of SJQCSL is primarily limited to deaf people and their families in co-residence. Although there is some variation among the language ecology of each family, the families’ language practices and ideologies exhibit some common themes. First, deaf and hearing adults do not practice communicative accommodation toward their children by adjusting to their perceived linguistic and cognitive abilities. Second, hearing adults do not practice communicative accommodation toward deaf people by making conversations accessible through signing and speaking at the same time or interpreting spoken speech. Third, deaf adults believe their hearing children should participate in spoken conversations because they can already hear and talk and do not need to know how to sign proficiently. Fourth, some adults believe their signs cannot express novel and abstract topics easily, and requested that the author offer some solutions to their problem.

The author, a sign linguist by training, identified some discrepancies between her own scholarly ideologies and her research participants’ ideologies about sign languages. Although she subscribes to the belief that all natural human languages contain intrinsic merit, she recognizes that the signing families have a different perspective towards SJQCSL, viewing it as a potentially bounded communication system that does not distinguish gestures from signs.

**References**

Hou, L. Y-S. (2016). “Making Hands”: Family sign languages in the San Juan Quiahije community. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Texas at Austin. Austin, TX.