

Pike Center Symposium Series on Language in Relation to Human Flourishing

Convening scholars and other thought leaders to foster integrative scholarship around the [issues](#) of language in relation to human flourishing.



Call for Symposium Proposals

The Overall Theme

The title for the Symposium Series, “Language in relation to ...”, is a nod to the title of Kenneth Pike’s *magnum opus* about “a unified theory of the structure of human behavior.” The overall theme of our series, “Language in relation to human flourishing,” flows from Pike’s even greater agenda to pursue scholarship that integrates with God and neighbor. In the words of SIL’s vision statement: “We long to see people flourishing in community using the languages they value most.” The purpose of the series is to foster new avenues of research about how language and language development contribute to human flourishing, affording opportunities to consider creative approaches to the disciplines we traditionally study.

The Symposium Series

The Symposium Series is organized around the overarching theme of language in relation to human flourishing. As described below in [Format of a symposium](#), there are three types of symposia ranging from exploration of new topics for research to presentation of results that are well researched and peer-reviewed.¹ What is exploratory in the first symposium can advance to a working symposium in the next cycle and to a public symposium that features a set of polished papers ready for publication as the final output. It is hoped that this kind of incremental structure will enable scholars to organize themselves around timely research themes that are relevant to their interests and give them a means for advancing their research to a publishable state.

¹ The idea of a series of graduated symposia draws from a similar format used by the [Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania](#) (ASAO) where the progression is from informal and working session to symposia.

Topics of Interest

The Pike Center believes that language is a vital ingredient in human flourishing, but language communities on the margins of the dominant society often do not experience this. In pursuing scholarship that builds capacity for language development, we direct our research to issues that are relevant to developing new functions for a language or to restoring lost functions. As explained in greater depth on the [Issues](#) page of our website, this means we do research that helps to understand the conditions keeping languages from being instruments of flourishing and to develop better ways of addressing those conditions. This involves research on language as it functions in the life of a community. Working toward more resources in these languages also involves research on the structure of the language itself as a system for human communication.

The theme for one of the organized symposium that potentially develops into a series could fall under any of the following general topics:

- Language in life
 - Identity and heritage
 - Education and development
 - Migration and change
 - Well-being and faith
- Language as system
 - Sounds and alphabets
 - Words and dictionaries
 - Grammar and style
 - Meaning and translation

In reviewing proposals for specific themes to be researched through this symposium series, the prioritization of research problems in SIL's [Corporate Research Agenda](#) will be used to help establish priorities for funding. (Note: as long as a symposium is held online, funding for travel will likely not be an issue.)

Format of the symposium types

The symposia in the series are of three kinds correlating with the progression of research on a particular theme. The same theme is repeated in three consecutive symposia, advancing to the next step of the research process in each subsequent symposium. The three symposium types in order of the process are:

- *Exploratory Symposium* — In preparation for an exploratory symposium, the organizers issue a *Call for Participation* which poses a research problem and describes their vision for the research output. When the symposium convenes, the organizers lead the

participants in exploring the research problem together. Participants do not write a full paper; rather, the *Call* provides specifications for a one-page concept paper in which they describe their potential contribution. The focus of the symposium is to brainstorm and be creative. The goal is to form a critical mass of ideas and people around which a subsequent working symposium can be planned. A report on the outcomes of the symposium is produced to serve as a resource for those who participate in the working symposium. More details on the “ingredients” and expectations of this type of symposium may be found in the [Guide to organizing an Exploratory Symposium](#).

- *Working Symposium* — In a working symposium, the organizers have put out an open *Call for Papers* and all of the accepted papers have been made available to all participants in the preliminary proceedings of the symposium. In the working symposium, the focus is not on presenting the papers but on giving peer feedback and on synthesis of ideas. The participants discuss themes and research questions, both to elicit the peer review of content that will allow each author to produce a better final paper, and also to explore the gaps that remain in the coverage of the topic. Participants are encouraged to identify invited contributions that could complete the coverage for the public symposium. More details on the “ingredients” and expectations of this type of symposium may be found in the [Guide to organizing a Working Symposium](#).
- *Public Symposium* — A public symposium is for the final public presentation of polished papers. A major goal of such a symposium is to encourage administrators and practitioners to consider how the papers can be integrated into best practices of the Bible translation and language development movements. The collection of papers that have reached this stage are released as a thematic publication. The venue for presentation may be one which is not a Pike Center event, in which case it is branded as a theme-focussed Pike Center symposium held in conjunction with the other event, e.g., a Pike Center symposium held in conjunction with the International Language Assessment Conference (ILAC).

Attendance at exploratory and working symposia is not limited to the accepted participants. Practitioners, administrators, and other scholars are welcome to observe; drop-ins are especially welcome when the symposium takes place at an in-person Annual Meeting.

The timing of a symposium

The Pike Center Annual Meeting provides a natural time and venue for a Pike Center symposium, especially when we are able to hold the Annual Meeting in person. Thus the sequence of three symposia on a particular theme could be held as part of three successive Annual Meetings. It is not a requirement, however, that a symposium be conducted as part of the Annual Meeting. A public symposium, for example, is ideally held in conjunction with

another event that provides a larger audience. In addition, if the organizers wish to advance through the three stages more quickly than one stage per year, they are welcome to pursue a fast-tracked schedule. Thus, an online exploratory symposium might be scheduled six to eight months ahead of the Annual Meeting in anticipation of holding the working symposium at the Annual Meeting. Or an exploratory symposium held at the Annual Meeting could be followed up by an online working symposium six to eight months later. Organizers are free to work with their research groups to find a pace and timing that suits their work and that gives opportunity to present the final public symposium in a venue more public than a Pike Center Annual Meeting.

Proposing a Symposium

The organizers of a proposed symposium within the Pike Center Symposium Series must submit a proposal to the Symposium Series organizers. The proposal consists of two parts: an application and the Call. [The application](#) to propose a symposium asks for basic information such as the names of the co-organizers and the requested budget (if applicable). [The Call](#) is more substantive, asking for why the research question or theme is important and describing how the co-organizers plan to lead the effort to a publication.

The submissions will be reviewed by an organizing committee who will review it for suitability in the overall series “Language in Relation to Human Flourishing.” As long as the symposia are held online, there need be no limit to the number which are being held in conjunction with an Annual Meeting. However, when meetings are able to be held in person again, proposals will have to be evaluated on the basis of available time and funding, in which case the committee will need to select the ones which they rate most highly.

There is no specific deadline for submitting a symposium proposal since symposia can in theory be held at any time. Having said this, the organizers should be mindful of the planning schedule for an event around which they are trying to organize the symposium, e.g., building up to a public symposium held in conjunction with another event, or planning a symposium to be held in conjunction with the Pike Center Annual Meeting.

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