



AUTUMN 2021

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS

# NEWSLETTER



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## Message from Chair Richard Wright



Looking back at the 2020-2021 academic year we continued to grapple with the profound changes in our lives brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am deeply grateful to the Linguistics faculty who taught a full year of courses online and found ways to engage our students, with compassion and empathy, despite being fully remote. I would also like to acknowledge the incredible hard work on the part of our graduate and undergraduate students who adjusted to learning online and completed their coursework while overcoming difficult obsta-

cles. Our faculty and students did this from home while adjusting to schools and daycares being closed, while caring for loved ones, and without the infrastructure that the physical university campus provides. We look forward to in-person learning and research in 2021-2022.

2020-2021 was a busy year with many changes. In September, we welcomed a new assistant professor, **Qi Cheng**, who specializes in language processing and learning, the neural foundations of language, and early neural plasticity for language, featured in this newsletter. We also welcomed teaching assistant professor, **Dan Mathis**, who brings years of teaching excellence to our ASL program. In June, we bid farewell to **Edith Aldridge** who has taken a position as an Associate Research Fellow, in the Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica, Taiwan. We also said farewell to **Kirby Conrod**, who has taken a position as Visiting Assistant Professor in Linguistics at Swarthmore, and **Olga Zamaraeva**, who is now a post-doctoral researcher at University of A Coruña (Galicia, Spain), working with Professor Carlos Gómez Rodríguez at the Department of Informatics on natural language parsing algorithms. We said goodbye to our program coordinator, **Misha Burgess**, and welcomed a new program coordinator, **Kyung Lim**. Finally we are welcoming our newest assistant professor, **Myriam Lapierre**, whose research interests lie at the intersection of formal phonology, experimental phonetics, language documentation, and typology, focusing on the sound systems of Amazonian languages of Brazil.





In July, we mourned the loss of a most beloved PhD student and longtime undergraduate advisor, **Jiahui Huang**. The Jiahui Huang Memorial Fund supports the installation of the Jiahui Huang Memorial Bench outside the entrance of Guggenheim Hall, and supports students at all levels in Linguistics.



Our faculty and students are the center of our department and they continued to demonstrate the high caliber of teaching, learning, and research. In June, 50 linguistics undergraduates received their BA degrees, many with honors: 2 linguistics department honors, 5 Phi Beta Kappa, 11 Cum Laude, 1 Magna Cum Laude, and 2 Summa Cum Laude. In our graduate programs, 36 students received their MS in computational linguistics, 3 received a PhC in linguistics, and 4 received a PhD in linguistics. We wish them all the best in this new chapter of their lives and look forward to hearing about their academic and career achievements. **Sharon Hargus** was awarded the prestigious LSA Ken Hale award for decades of tireless work with three endangered Athabaskan languages of Alaska and British Columbia and the Yakama Sahaptin language of Washington state. **Alicia Beckford Wassink** was elected to the LSA Executive Committee, continuing a UW tradition in leadership at the LSA.

*We are all eager to welcome our students back to campus for the 2021-2022 school year!*





## PhD awarded: Anna Moroz



Congratulations to **Anna Moroz**, who filed her dissertation, *Exploring Applications of Rootedness in Sociolinguistic Research in Southern Oregon*, Summer 2021.

Anna dissertation study, supervised by **Betsy Evans**, explored the importance of rootedness, defined as orientation towards place, and how it factors into sociolinguistic studies. The objective of the research was to operationalize rootedness and apply that to research conducted in Jackson and Josephine Counties, Oregon. These counties, located along the California-Oregon border, have experienced social changes due to in-migration from California and a changing agricultural industry.

Although rootedness is not a new concept in sociolinguistics, it has been infrequently operationalized to understand its role in language change. Rootedness can be operationalized by assigning a value to a person's level of attachment to their community, based on their attitudes towards that community and plans for their future in the area. This method of quantifying rootedness is akin to the operationalization of other sociolinguistic variables such as age, socioeconomic status, gender, etc., in that it is a grouping mechanism for measuring how shared identities influence language use. The operationalization investigated questions such as travel, future plans in the area, and attitudes about living in the community. The results suggest that the operationalization differentiates participants on social characteristics that would not be immediately evident based on traditional social variables such as gender and age.

Analysis of a small set of acoustic data of the vowel systems of the respondents in Moroz's study showed the presence of the low-back merger or near merger, BOOT fronting, BAT backing, BAN raising, and BEG raising for some speakers suggesting some similarity with vowel systems similar to recent descriptions of speakers in Redding, California. Moroz argued, however, that the use of linguistic features associated with California may not be speakers aligning themselves linguistically with California and/or urban California due to negative discourse about California exhibited by the community. Although correlations between the linguistic variables and the rootedness scores provided by the metric were not significant in this study, closer inspection of subcategories of the rootedness measure were helpful in understanding the respondents' use of BEG raising. Specifically, strong identification with and investment in local issues suggests less BEG raising, a feature found with speakers in Washington state (in research by **Alicia Wassink**) and less so with Oregon.





# Folk Linguistics Online Mapping



Prof. Betsy Evans

The Folk Linguistics Online Mapping (FLOM) tool represents an advance in the collection of data for perceptual dialectology. The tool was developed by **Betsy Evans** with assistance from Matthew Dunbar, Assistant Director of the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology, and LING and CDSE graduate students. Instead of drawing on paper maps, respondents can draw areas that they perceive as populated by people with a different way of speaking from their own.

This digital tool allows for more systematic data collection and analysis, with the further advantage that the tool can be used online for non-local data collection, as has been done in New England in joint work by Evans' students **Ben Jones** and **Nicole Chartier** (PhD 2020).

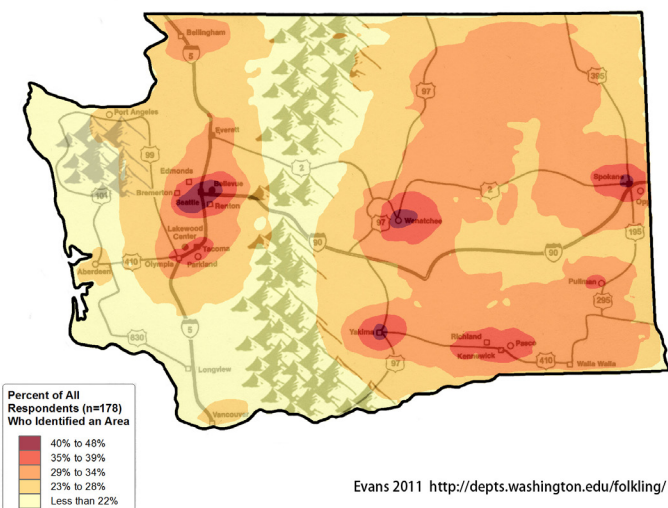


Nicole Chartier



Ben Jones

Washington Residents' Perceptions of Where People Speak Differently  
All Respondents



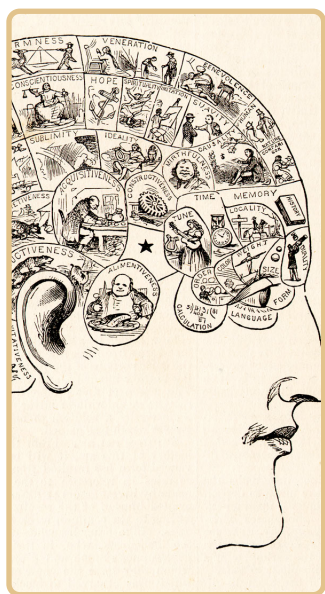
Evans has continued work on FLOM with the support of a 2020 grant from the Royalty Research Fund. In Autumn 2020, two undergraduates were recruited to assist with writing code, one of whom, **Junyin Chen**, has continued on the project and has been admitted to the CLMS program. Data collection in New England and Washington continued during summer 2021 and Junyin may use his work on FLOM to complete some of his CLMS requirements. The new FLOM tool will allow researchers to create inclusive survey questions. Like the previous version of this tool, it will be available free to researchers, removing key barriers to entry for scholars of this type of research.

Want to know more about FLOM?  
Check out this video!



## New courses

### Language and Thought



LING 210, taught by **Laura McGarrity**, starts off with Benjamin Whorf's theory of linguistic relativity, the idea that the structure of human language influences, shapes, and possibly even constrains the way we think, then examines arguments and data for both strong and weak interpretations of the hypothesis as well as opposing viewpoints. LING 210 will be offered again Spring 2022.

### Data Science courses

Computational Methods for Linguists (LING 471), taught by **Olga Zamaraeva** Spring 2021, included such topics as data in computational linguistics, how linguistic theory and questions dictate choice of computational methods, and ethical and social implications of data uses in linguistics. Students learned basic programming concepts (using Python), as well as command-line interface, version control, techniques for data cleaning, representing data as vectors, thoughtfully choosing a model, running the model, and interpreting and visualizing results. LING 471 fulfills an elective requirement for the Data Science minor.

R for Linguists (LING 421/521), first taught by **Alicia Beckford Wassink** Spring 2018 and annually thereafter, also fulfills the data skills course requirement of the Data Science minor. This course introduces students to R and includes character processing, validation, summarization, and visualization of linguistic data. Students learn to work with different datatypes, and produce scripts useful to researchers in different linguistic subfields.

### Introduction to Statistics for Linguists

Finally, UW linguists have a statistics class, LING 520, tailored to testing typical research questions in linguistics. **Qi Cheng** taught this Spring 2021 course, which covers descriptive statistics, probability, sampling, null hypothesis significance testing, t-test, correlation, simple and multiple linear regression, ANOVAs, logistic regression, tests of independence, and (generalized) linear mixed models.

### Health and Wealth

The Autumn 2021 offering of HUM 101, the first quarter of a three-quarter Humanities First sequence 2021-2022, addresses Health and Wealth from a variety of perspectives. The class is taught by a team of faculty from English (**Stephanie Clare**), Linguistics (**Naja Ferjan Ramírez**), and Music History (**Anne Searcy**). In her part of the course, Ferjan Ramírez will teach about how childhood poverty, racial, and socioeconomic disparities affect infant brain and language development.

### Proseminar for incoming graduate students

Autumn 2021 the department will launch a new seminar series, LING 599B, designed to help orient and connect first-year PhD students in Linguistics. Drawing on popular seminars taught by **Edith Aldridge** and **Ellen Kaisse** in past years, the three-quarter series will focus on student and professional development. The seminar will place considerable emphasis on promoting mental health and fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in linguistics and beyond. Notably, the series will fulfill a key mission outlined in the department's anti-racism statement by exploring anti-racist practices in research and teaching and by raising awareness around imposter syndrome, which is known to affect underrepresented groups disproportionately. LING 599B is currently being developed by **Richard Wright**, **Shane Steinert-Threlkeld**, **Qi Cheng**, and **Naomi Tachikawa Shapiro**, and will be taught by Naomi this year. The seminar is required of first-year PhD students, but all graduate students in Linguistics are welcome to join!



## ASL Honor Society

The ASL Honor Society is a program administered by the American Sign Language Teachers Association to encourage and recognize high academic achievement in ASL. Since 2014 twelve UW students have received an ASLHS medal.

American Sign Language Honor Society (<http://www.aslhonor-society.org/>) medals are awarded to seniors who have satisfied the requirements and can be proudly worn on graduation day. To receive the silver medal (showing Alice Cogswell\*), students must complete 2 years of study of ASL with a GPA of 3.4 or above in ASL classes and a cumulative GPA of 3.2 or above. In addition, they must complete 5 hours of Deaf Community or UW ASL Club service. To receive the gold medal (showing Laurent Clerc\*\*), students must complete the ASL minor with a GPA of 3.7 or above in classes required for the ASL minor, and have a cumulative GPA of 3.4 or above, while also completing 10 hours of Deaf Community or UW ASL Club service.



Kristi Winter



At UW **Kristi Winter** administers the ASL Honor Society. Currently, students must apply for the award no later than a week before the last day of Spring quarter. Congratulations to these UW recipients of one of the ASL Honor Society medals: Sana Altamini (2021); Dany Hage, Alanna Boeck (2019); Jessie Zhang (2018); Josie Stump, Jennifer Power, Vicki Goldenberg (2017); Amy Busch (2016); Hannah Langlie (2015); Christine Liao, Dunia Sarwary, Rodney J. Harris (2014). (197 words)

\*a young deaf girl who met and inspired Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet to start deaf education in America after he brought Laurent Clerc to America. Clerc and Gallaudet established the first school for the deaf in America.

\*\*a Deaf teacher from France. He co-founded the first school for the deaf in the U.S. in Hartford CN and was an advocate for the rights of deaf people. He brought French Sign Language, one of the linguistic components of ASL, to America, and supported using sign language over oral language for deaf education teaching methods.





## Faculty Profile: Qi Cheng

**Qi Cheng** joined the Department of Linguistics in Autumn 2020 and directs the Neuroplasticity and Language Lab, where she researches the critical period and sign languages, and educates about the importance of language input early in life.

Qi grew up in Huzhou, China, on Lake Tai, about 2 hours southwest of Shanghai. She came to her current research specialization in a roundabout way. She entered Nanjing University thinking she would become a writer. Her 2011 BA in Chinese language and literature in 2011 entailed much study of ancient Chinese texts, and didn't include much linguistics until late in the program. But in the middle of her undergraduate studies she participated in a one-year exchange program at Hokkaido University, where she studied Language and Information Science. There she was assigned to a supervising professor, Lee Yeonju, a Korean phonologist, where she was immersed in linguistics, and wrote a term paper comparing Shanghainese and Korean phonology. At the end of her undergraduate studies she had given up on becoming a writer, but was now very interested in linguistics, so she enrolled in Chinese University of Hong Kong. There she received an MA in Chinese Linguistics and Language Acquisition, writing a thesis on the acquisition of the semantics of the Mandarin morpheme *ye3* by Cantonese learners, for which the character representing this morpheme is ambiguous in a way it is not in Mandarin. Her supervisor at CUHK was Gladys Tang, and after Qi finished her MA studies, she worked for 2 years for Tang as a Research Assistant at her Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies. It was there that she really started working with deaf people learning sign language as a first language. At the end of her RAship, she went to UCSD and studied with Rachel Mayberry, the San Diego area being the premier place for sign language research, critical period, etc. (In case you were wondering, Qi did not overlap with **Naja Ferjan Ramírez**, another student of Mayberry's. Qi started in 2014 and Naja left the previous year.)

After years of focussing on ASL, Qi is resuming research on sign languages of China, where she collaborates with Chinese linguists. Asked to compare ASL in the US with Chinese Sign Language in China, Qi first pointed out that while Ethnologue lists Chinese SL as the main sign language of China, Chinese SL is an official, formal, somewhat artificial language that many deaf people find hard to understand. There are instead many natural sign languages throughout China associated with localities like Hong Kong, Shanghai, etc. that have communities of signers. But relatively few parents in China know about the importance of early language input and it is rare to see them learning a sign language to improve their deaf child's life.

Qi also collaborates on neuroimaging research with researchers at Johns Hopkins University, where she had been planning a post doc when (surprise!) she was offered a job at the University of Washington in 2020.

Anyone interested in joining the Neuroplasticity and Language Lab should ideally know a sign language but Qi welcomes anyone who is open to or interested in psycholinguistics, acquisition, the role of language input and the role of cognitive skills in the development of language.

Qi Cheng



Prof. Qi Cheng

Penny the cat can often be seen keeping an eye on Qi during Zoom meetings.



## Featured alumna: Lesley Carmichael

June 2021 Department of Linguistics commencement speaker **Lesley Carmichael** (PhD Linguistics 2005) joined Microsoft in January 2006 as a Program Manager in Speech. At that time Microsoft was mostly looking for CSE rather than Linguistics degrees. How she got her job there testifies to her resourcefulness and willingness to plot her own course in grad school.

When Lesley Carmichael entered the PhD program in Linguistics in 1997, she was interested in phonetics and phonology and knew she wanted to end up in the tech industry but at that time we did not have a computational linguistics program that could help her get hired at a company like Microsoft. She credits getting her job at Microsoft to three main events. The first was her decision to become an advisee of **Richard Wright**, who joined the Linguistics faculty in 1998. Richard quickly made connections with other departments, and introduced Lesley to Mari Ostendorf (Electrical Engineering) and her lab, who were doing signal processing on conversational speech data. Lesley later performed prosodic labeling of parts of the Switchboard corpus for them. Lesley also worked with Richard on a grant from IBM doing prosodic annotation of speech data in different speaking situations. Her analysis of these corpora not only led to her dissertation research, it also led to the second fateful event, an internship with the Oregon Graduate Institute of Science and Technology (now Oregon Health and Science University) in Portland Spring 2003. They were looking for an expert on prosody, and she analyzed and labelled children's speech data for them. After finishing her PhD in 2005, Lesley took a few months off to travel around the world, pursuing job prospects through internet cafes en route. One of these was at Microsoft, and this brings up the third event which she credits with landing her her job. Her friend and colleague **Jay Waltmunson**, also a 2005 Linguistics PhD, was working at Microsoft in the Speech and Natural Language group. He put Lesley's resume on the top of the stack that the hiring manager was looking at, and pointed out her expertise in phonetics and prosody, explaining how that could benefit Microsoft's speech recognition and text-to-speech development.



Lesley Carmichael



Currently Lesley is Principal Program Manager Lead in the Microsoft Search & Assistant Platform team for Compliance, Privacy, and Special Clouds. This team drives platform alignment of compliance commitments and component deployments to support accelerated S&A feature waves. This team also builds customer trust via horizontal workstreams and deliverables, such as coherent consent and privacy related features, and tools and processes to support compliance and successful audits. Lesley is also dedicated to making the tech industry a place where people of all backgrounds and intersections can feel they belong and thrive and lead.

Lesley's commencement address touched on three themes: uncertainty, inclusivity and lifelong linguistic scholarship, and can be viewed from 05:43 on in <https://youtu.be/dzelXAv1YF8>



## Featured Language: Lushootseed

(Qwalsius / Shaun Peterson (Puyallup)) <<http://www.qwalsius.com/>>

UW's Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies (CAIS) hosts a *liłg<sup>wəčəb</sup> ʔiışəd* ('research family') focusing on advanced Lushootseed study and data collection. The group of undergraduates, graduate students, community members and faculty members works under the guidance of Tami Hohn (Puyallup). The indigenous language of eastern Puget Sound may no longer have any first language speakers, but Lushootseed is nonetheless alive and well And near and dear to the heart of some UW linguists.

Graduate student **Ted Kye** began his study of Lushootseed while an undergraduate at Evergreen State College, through Prof. Rebecca Chamberlain, a friend and student of the late Vi Hilbert, an Upper Skagit elder who taught Lushootseed at UW for several years. There Ted was introduced to a variety of grammatical materials, particularly those of the late **Thom Hess** (UW Linguistics PhD 1967), and learned about traditional Salish myths and culture from heritage speaker Lois Landgrebe of Tulalip. He also met UW's Laurel Sercombe, head of the Ethnomusicology Archive, and was allowed to access recordings from the Vi Hilbert, Thom Hess, and Leon Metcalf collections. After studying these materials and listening to recordings of native elder speakers of Lushootseed, Ted became fascinated with the grammar of the language. "I was particularly drawn to the phonetics, phonology, and morphology of the language. I recall spending 3-5 hours a day studying Lushootseed, practicing with speaking and pronouncing in the language." Now starting his third year of graduate work at UW, Ted's research focuses on the phonetics, phonology, and morphology of Lushootseed. Most of his class papers have involved some aspect of Lushootseed grammar. His first generals paper is a study of the effects of uvular consonants on vowel quality, using archival recordings. His second generals paper is a comprehensive survey of the valency-changing operators in Lushootseed verbal morphology. He has several other phonetic studies underway: acoustic properties of ejectives, vowels adjacent to rounded consonants, vowel reduction and undershoot.

Undergraduate **Stuart Heslop**, has been studying Lushootseed for about three years at UW, following exposure to it in high school.

When he found out about a new class in Lushootseed at UW, he registered for it, loved it, and developed a strong relationship with the instructor Tami Hohn and the other students. He and other students wanted to continue beyond the one formal year of class, so Stuart worked with Tami to set up a semi-formal second year of study, receiving funding from UW's Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies, to come together as the aforementioned *liłg<sup>wəčəb</sup> ʔiışəd* ('research family') under Tami's guidance and Stuart's facilitation. Their studies draw on Tami's teachings of Southern Lushootseed UW and her



Stuart Heslop



other expertise, as well as the work of the 1994 Lushootseed Dictionary, now online <<http://www.lushootseedresearch.org/>>. Ted Kye has also recently joined the group, which is currently annotating and transcribing recordings that took place between anthropologist Warren Snyder and speaker Amelia Sneatlum, a Suquamish elder. As part of his work as the facilitator of the group, Stuart has been preparing a morpheme index of these recordings.



Stuart Heslop and Tami Hohn tabling about the Lushootseed program at an event at wəłəbalʔtxʷ (Intellectual House) at UW Seattle

Challenge yourself with this Lushootseed interlinear glossed text puzzle, from Annie Daniels' Bluejay story, courtesy of Ted Kye. Can you figure out the free translation from the morpheme glosses?

dayʷ=əxʷ	ʔəs-ʔab-ši-d	tə	s-qʷəb~qʷbayʔ-s	ʔə	tiil	ǰʷəs
just=now	STAT-extend-APPL-TR	DET	NMLZ-PL~dog-3.POSS	OBL	DET	fat

answer to IGT puzzle:

'Fat is just given to their dogs' (They just give the fat to their dogs) (AD/Bluejay 41)



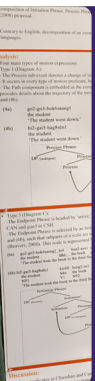


## Support us

### Support our program:

- Strengthen our department through the **Friends of Linguistics Fund** which is perhaps the single most important resource for the department. Gifts to this fund provide unrestricted support that can be directed where it is needed most.

**Any gift — large or small — is sincerely appreciated!**



We thank the many donors  
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via Friends of Linguistics.



## Want more UW Linguistics? Questions?

Web: <https://linguistics.washington.edu/>

Phone: (206) 543-2046

E-mail: [linguw@uw.edu](mailto:linguw@uw.edu)

Newsletter feedback or suggestions should be sent to **Sharon Hargus** ([sharon@uw.edu](mailto:sharon@uw.edu)).