



# BU Linguistics

## November 2016

### Fall 2016 Colloquia

We have had a lively colloquium series this fall, including the following presentations:

September 22: **Qian Hu\***, MITRE Corporation:

“Speech technology & applications”

October 4: **Rajend Mesthrie**, University of Cape Town:

“Race, class and gender in deracialising South African English: the sociophonetics of schwa today”

November 16: **Amy Rose Deal**, UC Berkeley:

“Countability distinctions and semantic variation: towards universals of mass and count”

\* Qian Hu received her PhD in Applied Linguistics at BU in 1993. She is now Chief Scientist of Speech Technologies and Senior Principal Artificial Intelligence Scientist at the MITRE Corporation. Her research areas range from speech and natural language processing technologies—including automatic speech recognition, speaker and language identification, audio and prosodic feature extraction, audio-specific query language, multi-media information retrieval and multi-modal medical data capture and representation, and combinations of speech technology and artificial intelligence and applications—to voice biometrics for authentication on mobile devices.

### Program News

This has been an exciting year. Previously housed within the Department of Romance Studies, Linguistics officially became an autonomous program ☺.

#### New degree programs

Our graduate programs are transitioning from “Applied Linguistics” to “Linguistics.” We are launching a new **MA in Linguistics**; see <http://ling.bu.edu/grad/MA> for details.

This now makes it possible to offer a dual degree **BA/MA in Linguistics**, and we have five students who entered that program as of September 2016.

We are also launching a new intercollegiate joint major with Sargent College in **Linguistics & Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences**.

#### Revised curriculum

Most of our Linguistics courses have been redesigned so that we offer separate course numbers (and requirements and expectations) for undergraduates and graduate students, even when they meet together.

For information about the courses we offer, see <http://ling.bu.edu/courses/>.

### Linguistics Program Administration

**Carol Neidle**, Program Director

**Paul Hagstrom**, Director of Undergraduate Studies

**Danny Erker**, Director of Graduate Studies (Fall)

**Neil Myler**, Director of Graduate Studies (Spring)

#### Honors and awards

Prof. **Charles Chang** received the prestigious Peter Paul Career Development Professorship, awarded to “talented junior educators emerging as future leaders within their respective fields.”

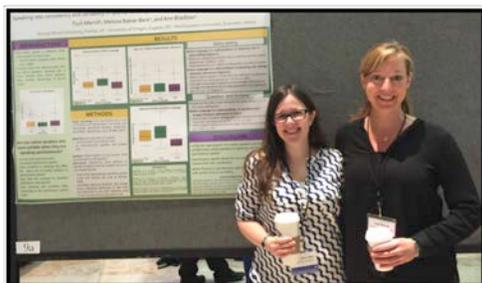


Prof. **Juliet Floyd** was awarded a Mellon Sawyer Seminar Grant for faculty development (with James E. Katz and Russell Powell) to pursue research into the philosophy of emerging computational technologies and the ways they are transforming social, ethical, and philosophical aspects of everyday life.



SPEECH PROSODY 2016

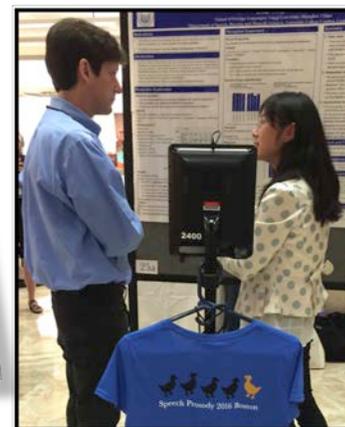
<http://sites.bu.edu/speechprosody2016/>



Two BU graduates, Melissa Baese-Berk (BA 2004) and Tuuli Morrill (BA 2002), both now Linguistics professors, present their joint work.



A view of the poster session, from above



Robot facilitating remote participation, thanks to NSF funding

## Conferences in the last year

### Speech Prosody - May 2016

This past spring BU hosted Speech Prosody 2016, "the only recurring international conference focused on prosody as an organizing principle for the social, psychological, linguistic, and technological aspects of spoken language." The conference attracted approximately 350 participants from Linguistics, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Speech and Hearing Science, Psychology, and related disciplines; in all, there were 691 authors from 44 countries of 262 oral and poster presentations (with a total conference budget of over \$200 K). Four excellent keynote addresses covered the neurological basis for prosody, processing of prosodic information, individual and crosslinguistic differences in prosody and its acquisition, disorders related to prosody, and integration of essential prosodic information in the development of systems for generating personalized voices for individuals who have lost the ability to speak for themselves.

Prof. **Jon Barnes** headed the organizing committee; Dr. Alejna Brugos, a recent BU PhD recipient (who had received NSF support for her dissertation research on prosody) was also a co-organizer. Barnes obtained NSF funding to experiment with technologies for remote participation in international conferences, including mobile telepresence robots.

### BUCLD - November 4-6, 2016

The 41st annual BU Conference on Language Development (BUCLD) was a resounding success. We welcomed 543 attendees for more than 180 oral and poster presentations. Maria Polinsky (U. of Maryland) presented Friday's keynote address, "Cascading consequences of syntactic reorganization: Ellipsis in heritage languages," and Angela Friederici (Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences) gave Saturday's plenary address, "Neural basis of language development." There was a lunchtime symposium on Saturday, "Beyond brilliant babies and rapid learning in lexical development: The long and short of language acquisition," and a closing symposium on Sunday, "How language learners shape languages." In addition, Colin Phillips (U. of Maryland) presented a professional development workshop: "Building your profile in a digital world."

We are grateful for the hard work of co-organizers Maria LaMendola and Jennifer Scott; committee chairs Anne Bertolini, Megan Brown, Lauren Gerrish, Kayleigh Jeannette, Max Kaplan, Nia Lazarus, and Pengfei Li; and faculty advisors **Sudha Arunachalam, Charles Chang, and Paul Hagstrom.**

We are already looking forward to BUCLD 42 (tentatively scheduled for November 3-5, 2017)!



Prof. Barnes welcoming participants

BUCLD 2016

<https://www.bu.edu/buclid/>



Faculty advisors plus co-organizer LaMendola



Registration desk at the George Sherman Union



Poster session

## Research Highlight



**Sarah Lawson** "Language Contact and Transfer Between Andean Spanish and Bolivian Quechua: Regional and Social Perspectives" (with Prof. Myler)



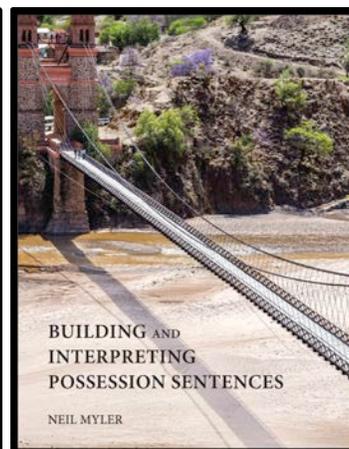
**James Sbordone** "Phonetic description of Southeastern Pomo, an endangered language of California" (with Prof. Chang)



**Dallas Walter** "Korean fricatives: Diachronic changes in phonetic enhancement strategies" (with Prof. Chang)

Congratulations to Prof. **Neil Myler** on his new book, published by MIT Press: *Building and Interpreting Possession Sentences*

<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/building-and-interpreting-possession-sentences>



"Examining and synthesizing ideas from the literature and drawing on data from many languages (including some understudied Quechua dialects), Myler presents a novel way to understand the apparent irregularity of possession sentences while preserving explanations of general cross-linguistic regularities, offering a unified approach to the syntax and semantics of possession sentences that can also be integrated into a general theory of argument structure."

Among the impressive endorsements:

"Engagingly written and carefully argued, this book touches on fundamental issues and constitutes a benchmark not only on the topic of possession, but far more broadly on the questions of how attested cross-linguistic variation should be modeled, and how such variation may be constrained."

—**Jonathan Bobaljik**, Professor of Linguistics, University of Connecticut

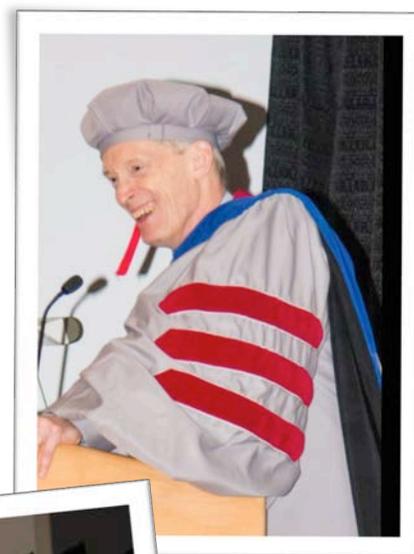
"Combining original fieldwork on Quechua with a cutting-edge command of argument structure, Myler has produced an innovative account of possession that highlights and resolves an intriguing contradiction in its crosslinguistic character. His balance of clean theory and powerful typology will have scholars returning to this work for years to come."

—**Daniel Harbour**, Professor of the Cognitive Science of Language, Queen Mary University of London; author of *Impossible Persons*



## Commencement 2016

Linguistics held its first autonomous Commencement ceremony last May. Joining us to celebrate our graduating class was Commencement Speaker Prof. Bruce Hayes from UCLA, who delivered a most entertaining address.



### CALLING ALL ALUMNI!

We would love to hear from you! Please fill out our survey, if you haven't yet done that (<http://www.bu.edu/linguistics/UG/alum-survey.html>); and send news for our Alumni Notes page: <http://ling.bu.edu/people/alumni>

