



Linguistics @ BU

New Linguistics Graduate Programs

After having launched new MA and dual BA/MA programs in Linguistics in 2017, we will be welcoming in September our first class of Linguistics PhD students! These Linguistics graduate programs replace the previous MA and PhD programs in Applied Linguistics, although we still have students completing those degrees.

MA. The MA in Linguistics is designed to provide students with a solid foundational knowledge of the traditional core areas of linguistic analysis, as well as a deeper specialization in a chosen subfield or interface area. Our goal is to help students reach a level of preparation suitable for pursuit of more advanced work in linguistics, or in allied fields with a commitment to the study of language. Many students who complete the MA degree will go on to PhD programs in these areas, while others will instead pursue careers in fields such as speech and language technologies, education, among others. We have particular strength in the areas of theoretical syntax and semantics, experimental phonetics and phonology, and language acquisition. Additional areas of focus include language documentation and field linguistics, language change and variation, pragmatics and information status, prosody, Romance linguistics, and sign language linguistics.

See <http://ling.bu.edu/grad/degrees/ling-ma>.

BA/MA. Undergraduate Linguistics majors now have the option of completing a dual BA/MA degree in Linguistics. This has proved to be a very popular option.

See <http://ling.bu.edu/grad/degrees/ba-ma>.

PhD. Human language is a multifaceted phenomenon. It is simultaneously a property of individual minds and of whole speech communities, and thus both internal and external to us. It both shapes and is shaped by our societies over time. It is a combination of sound (or sign), which has physical properties that can be measured, and meaning, which does not. Accordingly, becoming a linguist involves mastering a variety of methods, both quantitative and qualitative. The PhD in linguistics at Boston University aims to produce scholars who are versatile enough to be experts in both of these aspects of linguistic inquiry, yet skilled enough to do cutting-edge research in a particular subfield of the discipline. We offer a solid grounding in a range of research methods, including field methods, quantitative methods, and computational methods.

See <http://ling.bu.edu/grad/degrees/ling-phd>.



Dave Liebesman delivers a colloquium in the new Kilachand Life Sciences and Engineering building.

BUCLD 42

As ever, students have been actively involved in organizing the annual **BU Conference on Language Development**. BUCLD, the premier international scholarly meeting of researchers across all areas of language development, held its 42nd meeting in November of 2017, with a record number of attendees. See <http://www.bu.edu/buclid/>.



Student organizers at BUCLD: Xinwen Hu, Kristine Purdy, Anne Bertolini, and Natalie Zaleski

Faculty advisors, Profs. Charles Chang, Sudha Arunachalam, and Paul Hagstrom, secured five years of renewed funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for the annual conference. The grant funding will enable enhancement of accessibility and diversity at the conference by supporting graduate and undergraduate student organizers and researchers, including underrepresented minorities and women.



Professors Amy Lieberman, Paul Hagstrom, Charles Chang, and Sudha Arunachalam at BUCLD

WELCOME TO PROF. LIZ COPPOCK !

New to the Linguistics program as of September 2017, Prof. Elizabeth Coppock teaches courses in the area of semantics and pragmatics.



Prof. Coppock's research concerns the nature of meaning in natural language, and the principles yielding the meaning of a complex expression from the meanings of its parts. She approaches these questions through detailed study of particularly revealing phenomena including definiteness markers, exclusives, modified numerals, comparatives and superlatives, quantity words, egophors, and subjective attitude verbs.

Prof. Coppock is the Principal Investigator for a project entitled "Most and more: Quantity superlatives across languages," funded by the Swedish Research Council. The aim of this project is to document and understand cross-linguistic variation in the behavior of quantity words such as "many" and "much" and their superlative forms such as "most" and "the most". This project employs targeted semantic fieldwork across a broad range of languages to identify universals and map out the variability across languages that is found in this particularly volatile area of grammar.

New Courses

The following course is being offered this year for the first time this spring:

- **GRS LX 795 Quantitative Methods in Linguistics**
Introduces quantitative approaches to linguistic data, including visualization, hypothesis testing, and data modeling. Students gain proficiency in R, an open-source statistical environment, and learn the logic behind statistical techniques, as well as practical skills for using them.

Several new courses have also been approved this year, to be offered in future years:

- **CAS LX 120 Language and Music**
Is the co-occurrence of music and language in human societies coincidental or inevitable? We examine this question by defining what language and music are, exploring their structural similarities and differences, and surveying global diversity in musical and linguistic expression.
- **CAS LX 394/GRS LX 694 Natural Language Processing & Computational Linguistics**
Introduction to computational techniques to explore linguistic models and test empirical claims. Serves as an introduction to programming, algorithms, and data structures, focused on modern applications to NLP. Topics include tagging and classification, parsing models, meaning representation, and information extraction.
- **GRS LX 706 Advanced Topics in Phonology: Features and Cues in Representation and Realization**
Distinctive feature theory from Structuralism to the present. Issues include the putative universality of distinctive features, their phonetic underpinnings, tension among the various roles features play in the grammar, and applicability of features to phonology beyond consonants and vowels
- **GRS LX 736 Advanced Topics in Semantics & Pragmatics: Gradability and Quantification**
Explores the interface between gradability and quantification, and how tensions at this interface play out across a wide range of languages. Discussion of multiple theoretical perspectives on both gradability and quantity expressions, and investigation of cross-linguistic variation through fieldwork projects.

Colloquia 2017-18

We've had a wonderful set of presentations so far, with more yet to come this spring.

Fall 2017

David Liebesman, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Linguistics, U. Calgary, "Counting, Measuring, and Fractions"

Marcin Morzycki, Associate Professor of Linguistics, Michigan State U., "More than *Occasional*: Grappling with the Relative Ubiquity of Nonlocal Adjectives"

Melissa Baese-Berk (BU alumna!), Associate Professor of Linguistics, U. of Oregon, "Perception of Non-native Speech"

Naomi Feldman, Associate Professor, U. Maryland, "How Phonetic Learners should Use Their Input"

Spring 2018

Susan E. Kalt, Professor of Spanish, Roxbury Community College, "Acquisition, Loss, and Change in Southern Quechua and Spanish: What happened to evidential marking?"

Morgan Sonderegger, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, McGill U., "Large-scale Studies of Segmental and Prosodic Variation in Speech"

Lisa Green, Professor of Linguistics, U. Massachusetts, Amherst, "Development and Variation in Child African American English"

It was a special pleasure to be able to welcome back **Melissa Baese-Berk** (BU BA in Linguistics 2004) and **Dave Liebesman** (who taught at BU from 2009 through 2014).



Melissa Baese-Berk returned to give a colloquium at BU.

BU Linguistics Faculty Members get around !

Prof. **Coppock** has been presenting her at Georgetown, Yale, McGill, and Carleton Universities, as well as at UC Santa Cruz. She also taught a week-long course on "Definiteness and Determinacy" at the Winter School on Semantics in Barcelona.

Prof. **Myler** has also been presenting his work in many places, including the University of Chicago, the University of Connecticut, the DGfS Conference in Stuttgart, and the ACAL (Annual Conference on African Linguistics).

Three papers co-authored by Prof. **Neidle** will be presented in May at LREC (Language Resources and Evaluation Conference) 2018 in Japan.

Prof. **Chang** recently presented research at the BU Conference on Language Development (BUCLD) and the 15th Old World Conference on Phonology. He will also be presenting at Purdue University and the upcoming LabPhon conference.

Prof. **Erker** has been invited to present his work at Middlebury College, Queens College, and Princeton University. He has also been sharing his research findings at NWAV, LSA, and, as a keynote speaker, at the 21st annual OSU Congress on Hispanic and Lusophone Linguistics (OSUCHILL).

Prof. **Arunachalam** gave presentations at Rutgers University and other conferences and workshops: ASHA. BUCLD. TELIC 2017. and IASCL.

Program Administration

- * **Carol Neidle**, Program Director
- * **Jonathan Barnes**, Associate Director & Director of Graduate Studies
- * **Paul Hagstrom**, Director of Undergraduate Studies
- * **Neil Myler** (fall) and **Danny Erker** (spring), Director of Graduate Admissions

CONGRATULATIONS TO
THIS YEAR'S UROP RECIPIENTS!

Sharmaine Sun, "Language use and perceptions of Asian Bostonians"



Sharmaine's Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) project involves socio-phonetic research with two components: (1) examining features of English and heritage languages spoken by Asian Americans, across a range of ethnicities and life histories in the US, and (2) testing the perception, by both Asian and non-Asian American listeners, of Asian racial/ethnic identity in the speech of Asian American English users. This research also involves analysis of pilot data for this project that had been collected over the summer. [with Prof. Chang]

Roxanne Segina, "Analyzing Children's Group Affiliation and Lexical Acquisition"



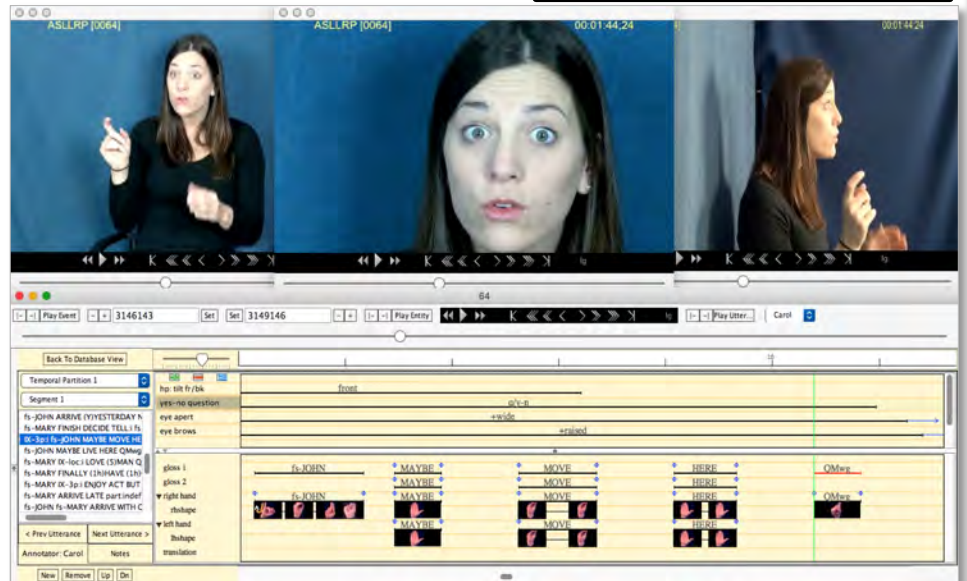
Roxanne's project addresses a decades-long battle in the acquisition literature. Several studies find that young children produce verbs only in the syntactic structures in which they have previously heard them, and some researchers conclude that this reflects a lack of syntactic competence, and that children are essentially repeating memorized chunks rather than assigning structure to the sentences they hear. Roxanne is asking whether this apparent "memorization" occurs because children are attempting to show that they are in the same social "in-group" as the speaker. Her hypothesis is that children will better demonstrate syntactic knowledge by using new verbs productively when speaking with people who are in their social out-group than with those in their in-group. [with Prof. Arunachalam]

American Sign Language Linguistic Research Project (ASLLRP) Releases New Software and Datasets

A new version of SignStream® software, designed to facilitate linguistic annotation of visual language data is now available at no cost.

A newly enhanced Web interface also makes it possible to browse, search, and download linguistically annotated video data from American Sign Language (ASL). These resources can be used in research on the linguistic structure of American Sign Language (ASL) and in computer-based sign language recognition from video, as well for teachers and learners of ASL.

<http://www.bu.edu/asllrp/SignStream/3/>



The ASLLRP, directed by Professor Carol Neidle, is a collaborative project involving researchers and students at Boston University, Rutgers University, and Gallaudet University.

Congratulations to our 2017 Award Winners!

Margaret Adham, **Jimmy Sbordone**, and **Wayne Yoon** were recipients of awards from the BU Humanities Foundation. They also received Barbara Argote Junior awards in Linguistics, as did **Kazuki Ito**. Barbara Argote Senior awards went to **Brittany Thayer**, **Dylan Tam**, **Kristine Purdy**, and **Madeline Reffel**. **Abigail Tolentino-Winter** and **Peiyun Xiang** received Ken Hale awards for Linguistics. Congratulations also to **Abigail Pauley**, who was awarded the prestigious College Prize for Linguistics. Abigail was also our first BA/MA graduate.



Commencement 2017



We congratulate all our 2017 graduates! It was great to see everyone. We were also honored to have **Larry Hyman**, Professor of Linguistics at UC Berkeley and President of the Linguistic Society of America, as our convocation speaker.



Please keep in touch !

Have you responded to our **Alumni Survey** ?
<http://www.bu.edu/linguistics/UG/alum-survey.html>



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