Making Research on Speech Sounds Happen

By Melissa Redford with contributions from Ying Chen, Wook Kyung Choe, Kyoung-Ho Kang, Grace Oh, and Hema Sirsa

At the University of Oregon, faculty members and students who are primarily interested in the sound structure of language conduct their research in the Phonetics and Phonology Laboratory. The lab is codirected by Susan Guion and Melissa Redford, and is located in two rooms in the basement of Straub Hall, among many of the psychology labs.

The Phonetics and Phonology Lab houses the equipment needed to conduct our experimental investigations. These focus either on the perceptual assimilation and categorization of speech sounds or on the production of sounds and speech articulation as a function of linguistic context, speaking style, language experience, or other number of factors. We also conduct psycholinguistic experiments to investigate a person’s ability to learn different sound patterns and other questions related to the mental representation of sound structure.

Whether we are investigating questions related to perception, production, or representation, we often rely on equipment to manipulate, record, or analyze speech acoustics. Speech acoustics are manipulated using equipment and software to edit or resynthesize previously recorded speech, which is most often recorded in the four-person sound-attenuated booth using one of several different types of microphones (standing, head-mounted, wireless) and analogue or digital recorders. A computer controls stimuli presentation during experiments and records participant responses. Acoustics are usually analyzed on additional computers.

We also have the ability to investigate speech production directly by measuring oral and nasal airflow, lingual contact on the hard palate, and jaw movement from video. The articulatory equipment and related software is located in the second of the two rooms dedicated to the lab. Currently, one-half of this room is configured to accommodate a study on first-language acquisition. Kid-sized furniture, cheerful props, books, and toys welcome our young study participants, who engage in different language and speech tasks over the course of several hours.

Speaking of ongoing research, Susan and I are currently working with six graduate students who are engaged in different projects, each of which will become a qualifying paper or a dissertation. Their research typifies the kind of work conducted in the lab, and to give you a better sense of this, I summarize some of these students’ work below.

Ying Chen, a second-year Ph.D. student, is investigating how perceptual effects may contribute to historical sound change. In particular, Ying is examining the effect of vowel quality and tone on the perception of...
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postvocalic nasals in Mandarin and Southern Min to understand how these effects may relate to the final nasal merger in Chinese. To examine this question, Ying developed a set of controlled stimuli that were then produced by native speakers of these dialects. The productions were then embedded in noise and presented to other native speakers for categorization. The pattern of perceptual errors will be analyzed as a function of the variables manipulated in the stimuli. Ying Chen will also analyze the stimuli acoustics to help her determine why listeners make the pattern of errors that they do.

A Ph.D. candidate, Kyoungho Kang, is also interested in the relationship between perception and sound change and in the speaker contributions to this relationship. His research is focused on acoustic cues to Korean stop types. The question is whether some cue combinations are more effective for contrasting stop types than others, and whether younger and older speakers use different cue combinations to enhance the contrasts between these stop categories for listeners. Kyoungho’s experiments typically involve recording native-speaker productions, making acoustic measurements on those productions to assess effects of stop type, speaking style, and speakers’ age. He then alters the natural acoustics by resynthesizing the speech so that he can test particular perceptual hypotheses. Kyoungho has already published the acoustic portion of his project in the Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, a top phonetics journal.

On the production side, Grace Oh is looking at the long consonants that arise across morpheme boundaries in English (e.g., immeasurable, unnamed, roommate, fun name). Her question is whether native English speakers treat all heteromorphemic long consonants in the same way or whether boundary type affects how speakers treat these under different speaking conditions. To answer this question, Grace has recorded speakers producing hundreds of experimentally controlled stimuli and has made thousands of acoustic measurements, which have been analyzed as a function of consonant length, boundary type, and speaking condition. Her results suggest that some long consonants of English are lexically represented, while the others emerge at the level of the speech plan, which encodes at least two different boundary strengths.

Like other students whose primary data are acoustic, Hema Sirsa is also making thousands of measurements. Hema is using these measures to compare the rhythm structures of Indian English to two genetically distinct Indian languages: Hindi and Kannada. The theoretical motivation for this work is to understand how speakers of Indian syllable-timed languages have nativized English, a stress-timed language. Preliminary results, derived from stories recounted by different professional actors, indicate that the rhythm structure of Indian English is substantially different from that of Hindi and Kannada, both of which have identical rhythm structures. This result is interesting because the anecdotal reports are that Indian English is syllable-timed like Hindi and Kannada, and phonetic work on another nativized English (i.e., Singaporean English) suggests that stress-timed English can be successfully transformed into a syllable-timed one.

Irina Shport is also interested in language rhythm, but has married this interest with her interest in second-language acquisition. She is currently investigating how a first-language rhythm structure affects the acquisition of a second language that has a different rhythm structure. To do this, Irina has measured consonantal and vocalic durations in structured spontaneous speech from beginning and intermediate American learners of Japanese as well as from native Japanese speakers. To determine whether and to what extent the stress-timing of English affects these American students’ production of mora-timed Japanese, she has analyzed several derived measures as a function of language level. Initial results suggest that the rhythm structure of beginning Japanese learners is midway between stress-timed and mora-timed. The results also suggest that different individuals are more or less adept at acquiring rhythm structure. She presented this as a linguistics colloquium.

In contrast to our other students, Wook Kyung Choe is engaged in psycholinguistic rather than in phonetic work. Specifically, Wook Kyung is using speech errors and reaction times to investigate the hypothesis that speakers simultaneously reference abstract and more detailed speech plans during production. Wook Kyung asked twenty participants to produce hundreds of short, medium, and long sentences, half of which were tongue twisters and half of which were not, as fluently and quickly as possible. She then went through all the sentences looking for speech errors, categorizing the types that she found, the distance between the error and its source, the conditioning factors for the error, and the relationship between different types of errors and planning as measured by reaction time. Next, Wook Kyung

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Welcome to the Fall 2008 newsletter of the Department of Linguistics. As with every newsletter, I am using this column to announce changes happening in and around the department.

First off, let us welcome Grant Smith as our new newsletter editor—and, even better, as a new linguistics major! While he has been doing great work starting with this issue, he still must rely on the quantity and quality of submissions from our greater linguistics community, so please keep sending information for future newsletters.

We are also joined by a new staff member: Kathy Rasmussen, graduate coordinator. She is rapidly learning the ins and outs of graduate student regulation and is a welcome, cheery face greeting everyone in the front office during the afternoons.

We have two faculty members on sabbatical this academic year. Scott DeLancey is about to leave for northeast India, where he will be working with a team to create a reference grammar of Baro, a scarcely described Tibeto-Burman language. Cynthia Vakareliyska is already in Bulgaria, with additional trips to Russia planned for accessing manuscript archives as a vital part of her ongoing work comparing and documenting older Slavic manuscripts. Her two-volume publication on the Curzon Gospel, which we announced in the last issue, is just now being released for sale in Europe and the U.S.

The department and the UO is pleased to host the Himalayan Languages Symposium July 30 through August 1, 2009. Scott DeLancey is chair of the organizing committee, so queries can be addressed to him via delancey@uoregon.edu. Next year’s summer NILI program should be especially exciting as well (see the NILI column on page 5). We are expecting a group from Surinam to attend, hosted by Racquel Yamada, a linguistics Ph.D. graduate student.

A number of faculty members will be missing classes in the first week of winter term. Counter to rumors of a Hawaiian holiday, we will actually be attending the January 2009 annual meeting of the Linguistics Society of America in San Francisco. We plan on doing preliminary interviews in our current search for a new assistant professor (an experimentalist position—for more information, visit linguistlist.org/jobs/get-jobs.cfm?JobID=57323&SubID=185812). This will be our first new tenure-line position in the department since Melissa Redford joined us in 2002, so I hope to have more exciting news to report about this in the next newsletter. At the American English Institute, we are thrilled to welcome Deborah Healey, from Oregon State University, who is joining us this winter. She has a well-established career in English language training, and we look forward to her working as part of the growing AEI team.

However, the most dramatic change on campus these days is the surge of freshmen and transfer students who have arrived this fall. Record numbers of students have arrived on campus, swelling classrooms and straining resources. We are happy to have this enormous incoming class, and those I’ve met are quite happy to be here. Further, a remarkable number of these new students are interested in linguistics, and our classes are beyond their normal capacity. I would mention the numbers of majors, but more are added every week, so it’s anyone’s guess how large a student body we will ultimately have around the linguistics department. I should have some new numbers in the next newsletter. In the meantime, the numbers of international students enrolling at the AEI for both the academic English (credit-bearing) courses and the intensive English courses are also soaring. Interest in distance education, especially for teacher training, is also exploding (see the AEI column on page 8).

Generous contributions have also grown in the last year, so we have been able to maintain our level of student support even while caught between current economic challenges and the growing student numbers. Many, many thanks to those of you able to help!

As a final note, congratulations to Troy Montes ’95 for his prompt and well-reasoned answer to the Apinayé language puzzle in the previous issue (see page 9).

Linguistically speaking (is there any other way?),

Eric Pederson
I was born in Harbin in northeast China, the city on the far-east end of the Trans-Siberian Railway. As a child I was always fascinated by the strange Russian syllables mixed in the local vernacular. They were words referring to fancy objects that the Chinese didn’t invent, including ruffled dresses with puffed sleeves and sparkling apple cider. Growing up with more wheat than rice in the diet, I turned out taller than average Chinese women of my generation, though I never learned the Russian language. My parents, both math professors at the local university, wanted me to study German because they were impressed by Kant, Beethoven, and Siemens.

I graduated from the Peking University with a B.A. and an M.A. in German language and literature. My master’s thesis was about the symbolic imagery in Nietzsche’s poetry. By the time I graduated, I had come to realize the staggering impossibility of understanding Nietzsche and anything else in literature without linguistic grounding.

I went on to study for the GRE and was awarded a Dean’s Fellowship in Germanic Linguistics at UCLA. There I learned to appreciate the pain and pleasure of linguistic analysis and was excited about research. After I earned my M.A. in Germanic linguistics there, I received a fellowship for a year in Göttingen, Germany. During that year I studied quantitative linguistics and had my very first publication, in German. Back at UCLA I taught German language courses until I moved to Germany to raise a family.

Having a daughter motivated me to continue with my study and forced me to organize life more efficiently. Perhaps I was scared by the knowledge that I would be my daughter’s default role model and I knew she deserved a good one.

While I was teaching Chinese to German students, I decided to write a dissertation on the Mandarin ba construction. I was hoping to end the half-century old and often tedious debate over the most controversial phenomenon in Chinese linguistics. In my dissertation I used historical and synchronic quantitative data and discovered usage patterns that sentence-based grammars hadn’t been able to reveal. I received my Ph.D. summa cum laude in general linguistics from the University of Cologne. I turned the dissertation into a book, published by J. Benjamins in 2005.

My primary research interests include language and cognition, culture-specific conceptualizations, and the way emotion interacts with cognition and language. In my research I combine corpus linguistics with experimental behavioral research methodology. Before I came to Eugene as visiting professor (2008–9), I taught cognitive linguistics, construction grammar, emotion, and pragmatics in Cologne. My research was supported by various research foundations in Germany including the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst, the Fritz-Thyssen Foundation, and the government-funded Lise-Meitner program for distinguished women scholars. These resources enabled me to take multiple trips to China for data collection and implementation of experiments.

I have published about affect in language, cognitive lexical semantics, and culture-specific conceptualization in various venues including Cognitive Linguistics and Journal of Chinese Linguistics. In addition, I have published in the German language on Chinese grammatical constructions as cognitive linguistic contributions to language pedagogy in German-speaking regions. In March 2008 I gave a talk at the LAUD (Linguistic Agency, University of Duisberg) Symposium in Landau, Germany, on culture-specific conceptualization of universal events. In May 2008 I was invited by the City University of New York to give a talk on empathy and the Mandarin passive constructions. In August 2008—in the middle of packing for Eugene—I delivered a talk in Brighton, England, on fear and politeness based on corpus data.

Currently, I am teaching Introduction to Linguistic Analysis and an interdisciplinary seminar, The Embodied Mind. In my seminar, I introduce the students to neuropsychological research of language and the brain, experimental research methodology in psycholinguistics, and cognitively oriented linguistic theories. I have the opportunity to share my enthusiasm for empirical research with my students. I show them how to formulate a hypothesis and make predictions accordingly, and how to design and carry out experiments or employ corpus data to test their hypothesis. In this class, both undergraduate and graduate students design their own research projects based on the readings they are doing for the class.

In winter I will be teaching Languages of the World and Language and Cognition.

My family and I are enjoying Eugene enormously, the stunning beauty of nature and the kindness of people. Meanwhile, my daughters—I have two—are having fun and making friends in school, in their new language of English.
How did people end up speaking English around the world?

Should British and American English be considered the only standard versions of English?

What is the future of English?

Should English be made an official language in the United States?

Does the difference between ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a First Language) matter?

What is International English?

Is there even such a thing as “English”?

These were just some of the questions that students discussed this summer in the Varieties of English course. As well as studying these important issues, we also made several case studies of different varieties of English, including Singaporean English, Indian English, New Zealand English, U.S. English, and English-based pidgins and creoles.

Students also learned how to tell the time in England and why Anna, our Kiwi instructor, always gets confused when people say her cakes are quite nice in the States.

Students undertook their own research, and in the final classes we listened to presentations on a diverse range of research topics, including Nigerian English, Japanese English, bilingual education, and the case for an official language of the United States.

“World Englishes” is an exciting area of sociolinguistics, so let’s hope we see the course again sometime soon!
The Genesis of Syntactic Complexity

By T. Givón, Professor Emeritus

Complex hierarchic syntax is a hallmark of human language. The highest level of syntactic complexity, recursive-embedded clauses, has been singled out by some for a special status as the apex of the uniquely human language faculty—evolutionary but mysteriously immune to Darwinian adaptive selection. This book tackles syntactic complexity as an integral part of the evolutionary rise of human communication. It first describes grammar as an adaptive instrument of communication, assembled upon the preexisting platform of prelinguistic object-and-event cognition. It then surveys the two grand developmental trends of human language: diachrony, the communal enterprise directly responsible for fashioning synchronic morpho-syntax; and ontogeny, the individual endeavor directly responsible for acquiring the competent use of grammar. The genesis of syntactic complexity along these two developmental trends is compared with second-language acquisition, pregrammatical pidgin, and prehuman communication. The evolutionary relevance of diachrony, ontogeny, and pidgination is argued for on general bioevolutionary grounds: It is the organism’s adaptive online behavior—invention learning and skill acquisition—that is the common thread running through all developmental trends. The neurocognitive circuits that underlie language, and their evolutionary underpinnings, are described and assessed. Recursive embedding turns out to be not an adaptive target on its own, but the by-product of two distinct adaptive moves: (1) the recruitment of conjoined clauses as modal operators on other clauses; and (2) the subsequent condensation of paratactic into syntactic structures.

T. Givón will be visiting and teaching at the UO in winter 2009.

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will present all the errors found in these productions to new listeners and ask them to transcribe what they hear. The goal is to provide an objective measure of whether the error is gradient or categorical. These categories are based on the assumption of two different types of errors: one type is a categorical error, which arises when one abstract sound or syllable type is substituted for another; the other is a gradient error, which occurs when certain sounds are blended. The expectation is that both gradient and categorical errors will be present, but that the first tends to occur when the source is proximal and the second when it is distal.

As may be evident from these descriptions, the resources housed in the Phonetics and Phonology Laboratory are mainly dedicated to work on the perception and production of speech as these relate to the acquisition and representation of sound structure. But our fieldwork colleagues and their students also use the lab to make high-quality recordings or to analyze the acoustics of a little-described language. Acoustic data render phonological description more precise and provide valuable, additional information for readers on the sound structure of a language. We expect that more field workers will make use of instrumental phonetic techniques in the future. We welcome this development and will seek to provide our colleagues with whatever technical expertise they may need to further their research endeavors.

“We should have a great fewer disputes in the world if words were taken for what they are, the signs of our ideas only, and not for things themselves.”

—JOHN LOCKE
Chris Doty

Chris Doty was born and raised in Oregon, and has attended the University of Oregon since 2004. He has always been interested in languages and linguistics, even spending a year in Finland during high school solely to learn the language. Language learning has continued to be an important part of his experience in linguistics. He has studied French, German, Arabic, and Swedish briefly, as well as Spanish and Nahuatl in more depth. He’s currently working on teaching himself Georgian (and trying to get back into Arabic).

While at the University of Oregon, Chris has worked extensively with the Northwest Indian Language Institute, which provides training to Native American language teachers throughout the Pacific Northwest. He wrote his master’s thesis on Tolowa, an Athabaskan language of southwest Oregon and northwest California. He is currently working on a sketch grammar of Chinuk Wawa (Chinook jargon, an indigenous trade pidgin and creole language used throughout the Pacific Northwest) to aid in the revitalization of the language.

Chris Doty

Chris is interested in phonetics and phonology, including the acquisition of new sound systems by nonnative speakers. He is also interested in language documentation and revitalization, and especially in finding ways for linguists to make their work accessible to the communities that speak the language being studied.

Kathy Rasmussen

Kathy Rasmussen was hired as the new graduate coordinator in October 2008. Graduates will now be flocking to her for guidance. She previously worked in the human resources department at Lane Community College and the enrollment services department at Chemeketa Community College. She was born and raised in Oregon, moving to Eugene in 1996. Kathy is married and has two children and four grandchildren. When she isn’t busy keeping graduates floating atop their sea of administrative requirements, Kathy enjoys traveling, working on her family genealogy, and competing at dog-agility shows with her miniature schnauzer, Cody.

Visiting Speakers

2007–8

November 2, 2007
Alex Peng
Beijing Normal University

March 7, 2008
Lyle Campbell
University of Utah

April 11, 2008
Carol Genetti
University of California at Santa Barbara

April 25, 2008
Sun-Ah Jun
University of California at Los Angeles

May 9, 2008
Hyunkee Ahn
Seoul National University

Fall 2008

October 7
Caroline Imbert
Laboratoire Dynamique du Language, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique—Université Lyon 2

October 10
Kewku Osam
Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana

October 24
Jae-Hak Yoon
Kyung Hee University

November 14
Zhuo Jing-Schmidt
Department of Linguistics, University of Oregon

November 25
Matthew Dryer
University of Buffalo

“The tongue is but three inches long, yet it can kill a man six feet high.”
—JAPANESE PROVERB
The American English Institute has been teaching several critical-thinking online courses a year since 2004, when the U.S. Department of State requested proposals from universities around the country to design e-courses in subjects such as English for business, English for law, assessment for English as a foreign language, teaching English to young learners, and teaching critical thinking. Leslie Opp-Beckman and Cindy Kieffer submitted the proposal, later approved, for the Teaching Critical Thinking course.

Teaching Critical Thinking is a teacher-training course for both teachers of English and teachers of related disciplines. More than a third of the world’s nations have been served by this course over the past four years. Currently, Agnieszka Albozsta and Deanna Hochstein, members of the institute faculty, teach four sections a year. These courses are delivered asynchronously through the Blackboard course-delivery system.

The course goal is to instruct teachers and teacher trainers in current critical-thinking theory and practice. The curriculum is divided into three phases: developing teacher critical-thinking skills, redesigning curriculum to include critical thinking, and planning for further development of critical thinking, both personally and professionally. Besides applying critical thinking to and in their instruction, course participants are also encouraged to present at conferences, train teachers within their own teaching contexts, and publish articles resulting from the learning they have done in this course.

Participants have been both professionally and personally influenced by the class as evidenced in the comments that follow.

“Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.”

—Michael Scriven and Richard Paul, presented at the eighth annual International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform, summer 1987

In addition to teaching these courses online, AEI faculty members have traveled abroad to give workshops and presentations. Cindy Kieffer and Leslie Opp-Beckman conducted training in Egypt, Burma, Thailand, and El Salvador in 2006 and 2007. Later this month, Deanna Hochstein will be leading teacher-training workshops related to critical thinking in northern Chile. Other upcoming presentations include TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), ABS International in Argentina, and the Hawaii International Conference on Education, by Agnieszka Albozsta and Deanna Hochstein.

For more information about the course, visit aei.uoregon.edu/eteacher.

Critical thinking e-course participants

Mathilde from Indonesia

Safia from Mauritania

Jessica from Chile

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“Critical thinking made me change my point of view of my life and my profession. It was really hard but I learned a lot. Now I know how to include this in my lessons. I understand that I don’t know so much of it, but I will try to read to improve more about my knowledge of CT.”

—Santa Requeno, Peru
Kweku Emanuel Osam finished his Ph.D. in linguistics at the University of Oregon in 1994, focusing on the morphosyntax of Akan. He then held a two-year appointment at the University of Zimbabwe, and in 1996 began teaching in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Legon, Ghana. In addition, Professor Osam has taught at the University of Botswana and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. With funding from the Norwegian Centre for International University Cooperation, Osam has led a major development project concerned with local Ghanian languages, entitled Computational Lexicography, Typology, and Literacy and Language Development. Professor Osam is active in promoting research on Akan, Ikalanga, Bono, Ewe, and other languages of the Volta Basin, with particular emphasis on their grammar and discourse patterns. He has more than thirty publications and edited volumes on Ghanian languages. His current Akan research projects include a study of verb classes and alternations, and a reference grammar.

In 2002, he began serving as department chair in linguistics at the University of Ghana. Since 2006, he has been dean of the faculty of arts at the University of Ghana, where he is responsible for multiple academic departments.

Though he has taken on administrative roles, he serves as an expert consultant on many projects, and would like to see more University of Oregon students involved in study abroad in Ghana.

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In October 2008, Dean Osam revisited the University of Oregon, and gave talks on multilingualism and power relations in Ghana, Akan verb alternations, and the December 2008 Ghanian elections (in which he has an intense interest). He expressed his sincere thanks to the University of Oregon and the Department of Linguistics for fellowship support, without which it would not have been possible for him to complete a doctoral degree.
Keli Yerian

By Trish Pashby

The faculty members of the language teaching specialization bring to the program academic backgrounds in linguistics, language acquisition, and education as well as extensive experience teaching language in the U.S. and abroad. The latest addition, Keli Yerian, is no exception.

Keli Yerian comes to us via Georgetown and Stanford universities. She received her Ph.D. in linguistics from Georgetown, where she focused on sociolinguistics under adviser Deborah Tannen. While at Georgetown, she taught a variety of linguistics courses. The research for her dissertation brought her to the San Francisco Bay Area, where she completed a study on the role of gender, gesture, and body movement in interaction at self-defense courses for women.

At Stanford, Keli taught courses for international graduate students in the Language Center. She focused on speaking and advanced graduate writing for students from all majors. She was also involved in international teaching assistant training and became a certified ACTFL (American Council on Teaching Foreign Language) rater. A course she designed in advanced oral skills, based on some of the ACTFL categories—accuracy and fluency in description, narration, and critical thinking and discussion—became a very popular elective. In addition, Keli taught Teaching Spoken English, a teacher-training course for undergraduates, and developed and led workshops for volunteer teachers working with international students in summer programs. She also continued her research on body movement by investigating gesture use in presentations by native and nonnative English speakers.

While at Stanford, she met and married fellow instructor Robert Elliott. Together they have two sons, Oliver and Theo, ages five and three. The family decided to move to Oregon to create a more enjoyable lifestyle—including less time in the car and more camping opportunities—and to be closer to Keli’s family, who now live in Corvallis and Washington State.

Keli grew up in Alaska, a place she loves and credits with developing not only her enthusiasm for the outdoors but much of her character. Her family adhered to a “create your life” philosophy. While building their own house in Fairbanks, they lived in tents, even in winter. Keli was in charge of chopping wood and melting snow on the woodstove for dishes. Her mother was an educator, which influenced Keli’s eventual career path. While Keli was a child, her mother completed an M.A. and taught in public schools. Her mother later received a Ph.D. in education and worked as a university professor.

Several international experiences cemented Keli's interest in the areas of linguistics and language teaching. International House), which included opportunities to directly apply what was learned in an ESL classroom setting. Then, when her plans to spend six months in Togo, West Africa, were thwarted by political unrest, she ended up in Senegal, where she managed to find a host family (in the home of a popular actress) and spent four months studying Wolof with a linguist and tutoring students in English.

Since arriving at the UO in fall 2007, Keli has been very busy teaching. In addition to her LTS courses—including LING 540, Linguistic Principles and Second-Language Learning, LT 543, Second-Language Teaching, and the LTS seminar, Focus on Teaching Vocabulary and Grammar—she teaches academic English courses for international students at the American English Institute. She appreciates the opportunity to do both. Keli laughs and explains, “I have to practice what I preach.” Teaching the LTS courses “keeps you sharper in your own language classes.”

This fall she is teaching LT 546, Second-Language Teaching Practice, along with a writing course in the AEIS (Academic English for International Students) program and several pronunciation courses in the Intensive English Program at the American English Institute. She is also putting the final touches on the syllabus for a new linguistics course designed specifically for College of Education students, which she will be teaching this summer.

Keli enjoys teaching in the LTS program. Finding the students “experienced, interesting, and mature,” she sees her role as “providing an opportunity for sharing and learning together.”
Desrey Fox

Desrey Fox got her Ph.D. at Rice University in 2003, but she was a visiting scholar in our department for the last year of her dissertation writing. Afterward, she was a postdoctoral researcher for another six months, divided across 2003, 2005, and 2006. Her academic focus was various aspects of her native Akawaio language and culture, in particular the ethnography of speaking, sociolinguistic variation, and oral history. She and Spike Gildea began a collaboration to write a grammar of Akawaio, from which they have both made a number of presentations. However, her life took a dramatic turn toward public service in July 2006, when the president of Guyana asked her to stand for election to Parliament. One month later she was elected and sworn in as an MP (member of Parliament), and three weeks after that she was named minister of education. The Honourable Minister Fox is now so busy that we rarely hear from her, but every time we do, it is with the same message: governmental support for linguistic description of Amerindian languages of Guyana will never be stronger!

Yuka Matsuhashi

Yuka Matsuhashi received an M.A. in linguistics in fall 2007, with a focus on the language teaching specialization (LTS). Yuka credits his success partially to LTS program support, and his involvement with the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures’ Japanese language teaching assistant experience. Yuka has been busy teaching Japanese full time at the University of Nevada at Reno since fall 2008. He enjoys teaching and further developing his teaching materials in the beautiful Nevada sun.

Pilar Valenzuela

Pilar Valenzuela Bismark, M.A. ’97, received a Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of Oregon in 2003. She is interested in functional-typological syntax, language contact and change, indigenous South American languages, Spanish linguistics, and anthropological linguistics. She has published a book entitled Relativization in Shipibo-Konibo: A Typologically Oriented Study and various articles, especially on Panoan languages. Her doctoral dissertation, “Transitivity in Shipibo-Konibo Grammar,” received the Mary R. Haas Award, granted by the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas. Together with Shipibo female leader and artisan Agustina Valera Rojas, she is author of Koshi Shinanya Ainbo: el testimonio de una mujer shipiba, the first bilingual testimony of an indigenous Amazonian woman, which has been published in Peru by the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. She has also been awarded the prestigious Wang-Fradkin Professorship in Scholarly Excellence for 2006–8. Valenzuela is currently an assistant professor at Chapman University.

LTS Terminal Projects Now Available Electronically

Students in the language teaching specialization are required to complete a terminal project in lieu of a thesis. This year begins the fifth year of the program. Over the past four years students have completed fifty-two terminal projects. The projects are housed in the department library and coded into the department library database. Also, all projects have been saved as PDFs and are available on the department Blackboard site, which all linguistics students and faculty members may access.

Here is a sample of some recent terminal projects:

- **Listening Strategies, Listening Proficiency, and Gender**
  Jung Soo Lee
  September 2008

- **Bringing Your Language Home: A Workshop and Materials for Pacific Northwest Families Involved in Language Revitalization**
  Beth Shepard
  August 2008

- **Effective Ways to Use Storybooks for Young Learners in an EFL Situation: A Teaching Portfolio**
  Soyeong Lee
  August 2008
Virginia Beavert

By Joana Jansen

Virginia Beavert, an elder of the Yakama Nation, is one of the last fluent speakers and a highly respected teacher of the Sahaptin (or Ichishkíin) language, which was spoken on both sides of the Columbia River upstream from the Dalles. In 1937 at the age of fourteen, she began working with cultural anthropologist Melville Jacobs due to her knowledge of the language and culture of her own tribe as well as neighboring Salish tribes. During the Second World War, her stepfather began writing down his language, knowing that this was a critical step in passing it along to future generations. When Beavert returned from army service she promised to continue his efforts, and has worked throughout her life to teach and preserve her native language. Besides her own work of collecting history and language from her elders (collected stories, legends, prayers, place names, old words), Beavert has been a language source, interpreter, and research assistant for a long series of linguists (including Melville Jacobs, Bruce Rigsby, Deward Walker, Sharon Hargus, and currently Joana Jansen, a Ph.D. student at the University of Oregon). She is noted to be the most prominent indigenous proponent and worker for the documentation, maintenance, and revitalization of Yakama Sahaptin. Her materials constitute a valuable body of knowledge about the past of our state and region, a unique and irreplaceable collection that needs to be preserved for history.

From the 1970s, Beavert was a key figure of the Yakama language program, overseen by a consortium of local school boards. She has taught introductory through advanced courses to students of all ages, and currently serves as scholar in residence of Sahaptin language and culture at Heritage University in Toppenish, Washington. She is a valued instructor of Sahaptin through the joint efforts of the World Languages Academy, which provides regular and enhanced language instruction in various languages, and the Northwest Indian Language Institute (see page 5), an institute for Native American language teachers affiliated with the Department of Linguistics at the University of Oregon.

Beavert has become a model for younger tribal linguists and ethnographers who have taken inspiration from her contributions. She has inspired and motivated not only the Sahaptin people but also other indigenous people outside her community to learn, teach, and preserve their languages. The people of the Plateau, the Pacific Northwest, and the larger community (native and nonnative) whose life and work efforts are concerned with language maintenance hold her in great esteem.

Beavert has a bachelor’s degree from Central Washington University and a master’s degree in bilingual and bicultural education through the University of Arizona’s American Indian Language Development Institute. In 2004 she was the recipient of an NEH Faculty Research Award for work on a Yakama Sahaptin lexicography. She has received numerous fellowships, including awards from the Smithsonian Institute, Dartmouth College, and the Washington State Arts Commission. She has written and published several articles about Yakama language and culture, including a chapter in Spirit of the First People: Native American Music Traditions of Washington State, and has coauthored articles on Yakama morphology, phonetics, and phonology. She was the project coordinator of the 1975 Yakima Language Practical Dictionary and the volume The Way It Was (Anaku Iwacha): Yakama Indian Legends. She is presently working on updated and expanded Yakama dictionaries in conjunction with Heritage University and Sharon Hargus of the University of Washington, and on a grammar of Sahaptin with Joana Jansen of the University of Oregon.

Beavert has received numerous honors and awards for her language preservation and teaching efforts. She has been the Washington State Indian Educator of the Year, and in 2004 was honored by the Indigenous Language Institute for her lifetime of work on language revitalization. She was a key planner of the Yakama exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian, and has served on numerous committees and planning councils related to the documentation and preservation of Native American languages. She was an honored recipient of the 2005 Governor’s Arts and Heritage Award from the Washington governor and the Washington State Arts Commission, which recognizes individuals and organizations for their significant contributions to the creativity and culture of Washington State. She is a 2007 recipient of the Ken Hale Prize, awarded by the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas, a linguistics association focused on the study of languages of the Americas. The University of Oregon recognized her with the 2008 Distinguished Service Award for her life’s work in Yakama Sahaptin culture and language collection, protection, and preservation.
Publications


Workshops


Spike Gildea with Margaret Florey and Susan Penfield. Grant Writing for Language Activists or Linguists (a ten-hour workshop on how to identify sources of funding and how to write successful proposals to secure funding from these sources). Institute on Field Linguistics and Language Documentation, University of California at Santa Barbara. June 2008.


Conferences


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Accomplishments continued from page 13

Straub Hall Shared Home of Psychology and Linguistics

For eighty years, Straub Hall has housed class after class of students who have come through the University of Oregon’s education system. With 2008 being the eightieth anniversary of the building, it is only fitting to mention the two university departments within its walls.

Straub Hall has been the home of the linguistics department for more than twenty years. Designed in 1928 to be the new men’s dormitory by Lawrence and Holford Contracting, the building was set up to provide housing for 300 students, thus alleviating the overcrowding in the old men’s dormitory, Friendly Hall. The U-shaped construction consists of six practically separate units around a central hall. The dorm was intended to be a self-governing social unit. In 1933, the building was christened in honor of John Straub, professor of Greek and the dean of men.

In 1975, Straub Hall was remodeled to become the new home for the psychology department. About ten years later, the linguistics department moved into the second floor, expanding from its previous residence in Prince Lucien Campbell Hall. The child research laboratory is housed in Straub as well. In 2002, space was added for the Lewis Center for Neuroimaging and the courtyard. The center was dedicated later that year.

—UO Libweb
Departmental Grants

Linguistics


Scott DeLancey, Summer School in Language Documentation and Description— Participant Support, NSF Award, $10,711, June–November 2008.

Northwest Indian Language Institute


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Contributions

Our donors continue their generosity. As a result we have been able to help the following graduate students to attend conferences and go on research trips:


Cynthia Vakareliyska spent fall term of her 2008–9 sabbatical in Sofia, Bulgaria, and Moscow, Russia, under an ACLS Digital Humanities Fellowship, collecting data from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, and Russian ecclesiastical manuscripts for an electronic collation and typology of medieval Slavic and Greek calendars of saints.

“Learn a new language and get a new soul.”

—CZECH PROVERB
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Contributions of any size make a real difference. Here are examples of how your support can help:

A **$25 donation** finances school materials.

$**100** could help with a visiting lecture or field research equipment.

$**500** contributes to graduate student research trips and professional conferences.

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