



SPRING 2021

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS

NEWSLETTER



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Faculty involvement in Linguistic Society of America



Alicia Beckford Wassink began a three-year term on the LSA Executive Council in 2021. Wassink was elected to the council by a national vote of LSA members, running on a platform (<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/content/slate-candidates-lsa-officers-and-executive-committee-members-2021#wassink>) to advance the antiracism work of the LSA and “better prepare students for careers that draw upon linguistic training”. She is also a member of several other LSA committees: the Committee on Student Issues and Concerns, the Ethics Committee, the Elizabeth Dayton Award Committee, and the Committee on Ethnic Diversity in Linguistics.

Sharon Hargus received the Kenneth L. Hale award (<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/about/who-we-are/lsa-awards#hale>) from the LSA in 2021. Hargus previously served on the LSA’s Committee on Endangered Languages and their Preservation.

UW faculty involvement in leadership positions at the LSA is not new. Emeritus faculty **Fritz Newmeyer** was president 2002 and served as the secretary-treasurer 1989-1994, and was inducted as an LSA Fellow (<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/about/who-we-are/fellows>) in 2006. Emerita faculty **Ellen Kaisse** served on the executive committee 2005-2006, was president of the LSA in 2013, and was inducted as an LSA Fellow 2015. She is also currently a member of the Editors of Linguistics Journals Committee.

UW Linguistics welcomes Myriam Lapierre



Myriam Lapierre (<https://sites.google.com/berkeley.edu/myriam-lapierre/home>) will join the Department of Linguistics in Autumn 2021. Specializing in phonology and phonetics, including aerodynamic measures of nasality and the phonological representation of nasality, she is currently finishing her UC Berkeley dissertation, Towards a decomposition of the segment: The Phonology and Typology of Nasality. Her research involves fieldwork in the Brazilian Amazon on such languages as Panãra, Kajakwahrattxi, Xavante, Mëbêngôkre (Jê family); and Kawaiwete, Paraguayan Guaraní (Tupí-Guaraní family).

Myriam grew up in Canada, and speaks four languages: French and English (natively), Portuguese and Spanish (fluently).

Student News

Olga Zamaraeva, PhD

Olga Zamaraeva successfully defended her dissertation, “A dissertation on constituent questions in the Grammar Matrix, an HPSG-based grammar engineering framework,” Winter Quarter 2021. During Spring 2021 she is a Lecturer in Linguistics, teaching LING 580 (Goals and Methods of Computational Linguistics) and LING 471 (Computational Methods for Linguists),



Tsudoi Wada FLAS award



Tsudoi Wada was recently awarded a fourth year of Foreign Language Area Studies scholarship, through the Canadian Studies Center to continue his study of Tsek'ene, a First Nations language of British Columbia spoken in Tsay Keh. His project was previously described in the December 2020 Canadian Studies newsletter (<https://jsis.washington.edu/canada/news/tsekene-language-revitalization/>):

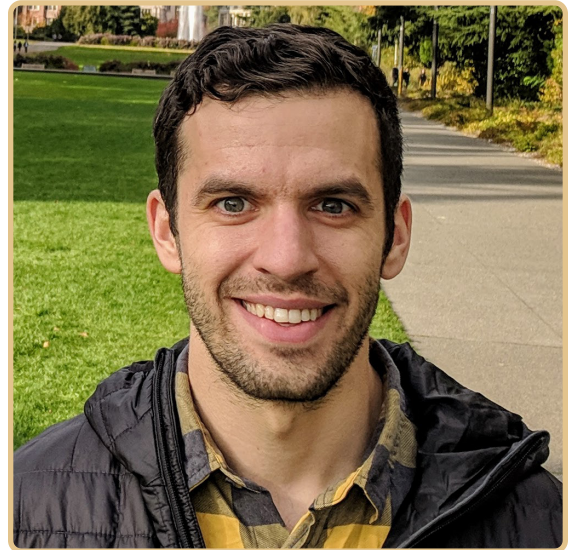
My name is Tsudoi Wada. I am a general linguistics graduate student in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Washington. My main fields of interest are endangered and under-documented languages, language documentation and preservation, and semantics. My research is focused on the Dene language Tsek'ene, spoken in northern British Columbia, Canada. I have travelled to the region where it is spoken multiple times over the past several years and worked with the people who speak it as a part of the process of documenting and preserving the language. In order to support my studies, I have applied for and received a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship for three consecutive academic years. The FLAS has been extremely helpful in aiding my language studies as well as my research. The language learning has been very helpful for my research and the area studies coursework has given me the opportunity to expand my knowledge of the history and present-day situation of the First Nations peoples of Canada. I have been very thankful that I've been given these opportunities to not just learn the Tsek'ene language but also to learn a great deal about the First Nations peoples of Canada.

During my fieldwork trips to Canada I travel to relatively remote areas of British Columbia. I am always stunned by the natural beauty of the land. I have also found working with the tribal elders and members of the tribal administration to be very pleasant. I've learned a great deal about the culture and history of the Tsek'ene peoples from descriptions or stories I've heard from the elders. The band administration has also been essential in arranging travel and lodging in the village where I conduct my fieldwork. They have also provided me with opportunities to join the community in their gatherings and recreational activities.

The preservation of language and culture is an important topic for Indigenous Peoples in both Canada and the United States. I believe the shared experiences of language revitalization can be a great resource for all Indigenous Peoples in North America. The collection of language data, the archival process and transforming that into practical materials for language speakers and learners is a long process. This can involve a great deal of trial and error. Sharing what strategies have been successful can improve methodology for language preservation and documentation for bands and communities that do not have extensive language resources.

Faculty Profile

Shane Steinert-Threlkeld joined the department in Autumn 2019 as a computational semanticist, with teaching duties in the computational linguistics program. He came to this specialization in a round-about way, double-majoring in Philosophy and Math at Johns Hopkins University with a minor in Computer Science. Although JHU didn't have a Linguistics Dept, an astute undergraduate advisor there noted his interests in language and suggested advanced study in the philosophy of language, which led to graduate school at Stanford and a PhD in Philosophy and Symbolic Systems. There Shane crafted his own interdisciplinary degree involving psychology, CS, philosophy, and linguistics (semantics and pragmatics) culminating in a 2017 dissertation *Communication and Computation: New Questions About Compositionality*. After Stanford, Shane spent two years as a post doc at Universiteit van Amsterdam (Institute for Logic, Language and Computation).



Less than two years after settling into UW, Shane has a flourishing research group, the Computation, Language and Meaning Band of Researchers (CLMBR), consisting of both graduate and undergraduate students who share his interdisciplinary interests in computation, cognition and semantics. Shane's research brings computational methodologies (such as learning simulations of languages) to bear on traditional questions in semantics and pragmatics. He and his collaborators are tackling some of the big questions in the field, such as explaining semantic universals and language evolution, via computational learning experiments involving real vs. contrived languages, modeling (e.g.) the conditions under which human language could evolve. As a bonus, he has found that the methods he has been using for studying the evolution of language can also be used to make progress on unsupervised machine learning extending this key technology to low-resource languages.



Featured Language: Kham ཁམས་སྐད་

Cairen Lhayong, in Gyegu monastery during the annual *Sakya monlam* event, during which hundreds of monks and nuns pray and chant for world peace.


During Spring 2021, **Cairen Lhayong** [tʃʰiɾɛlajɔŋ], a native speaker of Kham/Khams (khg) (ཁམས་སྐད་) Tibetan, which is spoken in China (not to be confused with Kham (kjl) Himalayan, spoken in Nepal) is working with LING 580 Field Methods class members **Sharon Hargus**, **Trent Ukasick**, **Bryan Thompson** as well as auditor **Nathan Loggins**, patiently and graciously answering questions about the grammar and lexicon of Kham. Cairen Lhayong [tʃʰiɾɛlajɔŋ], grew up in Yushu City or Gyegu [tʃɛkiɪ], Yushu prefecture, Qinghai province. She is trilingual in Standard Chinese and English as well as her native language Kham Tibetan (Yushu dialect), [tʃɛkikiʔ].

Gyegu prayer gathering house llavül.



Cairen Lhayong graduated from UW Winter 2021 with an MA TESOL degree. As part of the requirements for that degree, she took two Linguistics classes (400 with **Laura McGarrity**, 461 with **Kirby Conrod**). Nathan met Cairen Lhayong one day by chance in the English Department TA office, and they immediately started talking about all things Tibetan. They have been friends since then, and over summer 2020 he consulted with her on Tibetan morphosyntax for part of his dissertation. Later that year Nathan introduced Cairen Lhayong to Sharon.

Meeting over Zoom makes accurate transcription even more challenging, so prior to the start of the class, Sharon supplied Cairen Lhayong with a recording device so that she records herself saying the words and sentences produced during the class and then uploads them for class members to download and listen to, correcting their in-class transcriptions before the next class. Trent Ukasick set up a FLEx database which all class members contribute to. Class time is spent on a combination of the following activities: discussion of a weekly reading, discussion of previous and upcoming assignments, elicitation of new data, recording of new data, planning for the next session. Field methods classes can be a great source of data for students for general papers and/or dissertations.

Cairen Lhayong's ancestors lived in nearby XinZhai village. (Her surname [sindzi] comes from the name of this village.) She notes that "Xinzhai villagers are famous for their skills in carving praying words on the stones. There is a place in XinZhai called Jiana Mani [dʒànamàɲi], the world's biggest praying stone pile with more than 2 billion carved stones and sculptures. We regard Jiana Mani as a holy place, and people will walk around the stone pile and make circles. (We call that behavior "Guora" [kɔra] in Tibetan)." 

ASL Program



A one-week exchange program at l'Université de Poitiers (UP), France, to be led by **Kristi Winter** along with local sign language linguist Caitlin Golden, is planned for early fall 2022. Activities will take place on the University of Poitiers campus, which has a renowned Langue des Signes Française (LSF) (French Sign Language) program focused on international collaboration and understanding that is well-suited for collaboration with visiting students. A weekend excursion to Paris for Deaf community-related activities is also planned.

The purpose of the exchange program is to widen the cultural competencies of UW students studying either American Sign Language or French. During their visit to UP, ASL students will have the opportunity to:



1. Learn some basic vocabulary and grammar of Langue des Signes Française

2. Learn about the culture of the Deaf community of France, as well as the more general language and culture of France

UW Study Abroad <<https://www.washington.edu/studyabroad/>> will start accepting applications during Autumn 2021.

Lab News

Lindsay Hippe Mary Gates Research Scholarship

While working in the Language Development and Processing Laboratory under the supervision of Prof. **Naja Ferjan Ramírez**, prospective SPHSC major and sophomore Lindsay Hippe was awarded a Mary Gates Research Scholarship to study the effect of older siblings on the acquisition of language in babies



ages 6-24 months. She describes her hypotheses and findings to date: "The literature that I looked at showed that the presence of older siblings has an overall negative effect on the language development of their younger siblings, so I was expecting to find negative correlations between the presence of older siblings and the vocabulary development of younger siblings. However, in the sample I am currently using, the presence of older siblings does not negatively correlate with younger siblings' vocabulary development as measured by the MacArthur Bates Communicative Development Inventory. The presence of older siblings does in fact affect how many adult words and parentese their younger siblings hear and how many conversational turns they are able to participate in with their parents, so we are now looking to see if there are any aspects of the language environment of the infants in this sample that allows them to catch up vocabulary-wise to their peers without siblings. A couple of preliminary ideas are overheard speech and input from older siblings being conducive to vocabulary development." Lindsay will be presenting her research at the UW undergraduate research symposium, and is currently writing an abstract for the Boston University Conference on Language Development (BU-CLD).

Featured alumnus: Adam Werle

1998 double major (Linguistics, International Studies--Japan track) **Adam Werle** lives in Port Alberni, B.C. where he documents the Nuu-chah-nulth (Wakashan) language as well as the related languages Kwakwaka'wakw and Ditidaht (< /diidiitidq/ 'speaking Ditidaht language'). He has facilitated the involvement of other linguists in documentation of Nuu-chah-nulth, including **David Inman** (Linguistics PhD 2019), whose dissertation centered around Nuu-chah-nulth clause structure. Adam teaches Nuu-chah-nulth to learners, including FLAS fellows. His work was profiled in the December 2020 issue of the Canadian Studies Center newsletter (<https://jsis.washington.edu/canada/news/jsis-alum-now-teaching-first-nations-language/>):

Adam Werle, an alum in International Studies, Japan track, now teaches Nuu-chah-nulth to Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellows. Read more in his words:



I discovered in high school that I am fascinated by languages. Before university, I studied Spanish, Japanese, and French. At the University of Washington, I took linguistics, and studied Portuguese, German, Greek, Old English, Old Norse, Gothic, and Egyptian. I graduated from the UW in 1998 with a BA in Linguistics and in International Studies (Japan track). In 2009, I earned my Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and was appointed adjunct professor in the University of Victoria's Department of Linguistics.

Through my education in linguistics, and inspired by my professors Sharon Hargus (UW) and Lisa Mathewson (UMass), I developed a deep interest in Indigenous languages of the Pacific Northwest, where I had grown up. In 2002 I began working with elders of the Wakashan languages Makah and Ditidaht, documenting their languages, and facilitating community language classes. Later, I started learning Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth. After some years of making frequent research trips to Vancouver Island, I immigrated to Canada in 2007.

Although I had taught Wakashan languages at a basic level since around 2005, in 2014 I started organizing more intensive classes for advanced learners. While most of our participants are young Nuu-chah-nulth adults, some are non-aboriginal people. For example, we have accepted three UW Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellows into these classes over the years.

To our outsider participants, I have emphasized the importance of respect for local communities, elders, and their languages, and of giving back to the people whose languages we are learning. The results have included a lively and diverse learning cohort, and various valuable language materials, including a linguistics dissertation from FLAS fellow David Inman (2019, multi-predicate constructions in Nuuchahnulth).

Current UW participants in our advanced Nuu-chah-nulth class include FLAS Fellow Lindsey Popken, a Masters Candidate in the School of Marine and Environmental Affairs, and łuutiismaʔuł Charlotte Coté, a Tseshaht woman and associate professor, Department of American Indian Studies. Ironically, the distancing measures forced by the current pandemic have encouraged us to find new ways to connect virtually, with the result that I am working with learners from more locations than ever before.



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!

Want more UW Linguistics? Questions?

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