

Department of Linguistics, University of Connecticut



Important days:

- Spring Semester starts: January 22, 2008
- Spring Break: March 9 ~ March 15
- Last Day of Spring Semester: May 2



Ling News

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Interview with William Snyder

By **Pei-Jung Kuo**

As you may know, William became our new 'head dude' this semester. Well, I guess everyone is more or less curious about the life and point of view of a department head. Luckily, I had a short interview with him. The following are some excerpts.

Q: Has there been any change in your life since you became the head dude?

A: Well, my life has certainly become busier, now that I'm taking on a great many new administrative responsibilities. The work isn't actually as hard as linguistics, by any means, but it often requires me to learn new skills. For example, I've had to learn quite a bit about how the university administration works, how to secure funding for different types of departmental needs, and how to comply with official regulations. I'm also working to develop my skills at management and finances! My hope is that many parts of the job will become easier over time.

Q: As a new department head, what's your prospectus for our department?

A: My objective is for us to become the best linguistics department in North America. I think we're already close.

To achieve this goal, one thing I'm doing is looking for ways to help our faculty secure more federal grant money. At the moment we already have three new grant proposals that are either under review or close to being submitted. Increased grant support is extremely important, in my view, for enhancing the financial support we can offer our graduate students. The college is also willing to help, in this regard, if we can bring more grant money into the university. Our program already attracts many of the best students in the field, and increased funding will help us do better still.

Second, we hope to be allowed to hire some new faculty members in the coming years. We see needs for additional faculty in syntax, morphology, and psycholinguistics - which might mean language acquisition, sentence processing, or the neuropsychology of language. We also support the creation of a separate UConn program in sign language and linguistics, which might include additional faculty with interests in linguistics. Diane Lillo-Martin is playing a leading role in this project, and the department as a whole will be an active participant.

See **Interview** page 2



Interview *continued from page 1*

A third approach that I'm taking is to improve our links to other departments within the university, including Psychology, Philosophy, and Communication Disorders. In fact, there already exists an undergraduate major - still relatively new - in Cognitive Science, which encourages students to take a combination of courses in linguistics and related fields. At present I'm working with representatives from other departments to extend the Cognitive Science Program to the graduate level, and to promote more interdepartmental collaboration among faculty. As department head, my goal is to ensure that Linguistics is a central player in the university's cognitive science community.



“As department head, my goal is to ensure that Linguistics is a central player in the university's cognitive science community.”

Q: Could you say something to our current graduate students?

A: Our faculty members share the goal of making the department the best academic environment possible for our students, and we work together to guide the students in directions that will help them achieve their goals. For example, one area that we've been working on is ensuring that our students can reasonably expect to earn their Ph.D. within five years. This is because students do best on the academic job market when they complete their doctoral work within this time frame.

The academic environment is also affected by the quality of social interactions. I'm pleased to see that our department has a new film club, for example - thanks in large part to the efforts of Miloje Despic and Yael Sharvit. If the students have other ideas on how to enhance our academic environment, including its social dimensions, they should certainly let us know.

Graduate Fellows Fund



By **William Snyder**

Calling all alumni! Please consider contributing to the University of Connecticut's "CLAS Graduate Fellows Fund," and be sure to specify that Linguistics is the department you want to support. Fully 100% of your donations will go to Linguistics, and 100% will be used to support the scholarly activities of our graduate students. More information is available from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' Director of Development, Mr. Frank Gifford (Phone: 860 486-6798. E-mail: fgifford@foundation.uconn.edu).



Ling Lunch Announcement

By **Natasha Fitzgibbons**

Dear all, this semester we have a very nice series of Ling Lunches. I hope you enjoy it. Next semester is totally open at this point. No Tuesday has yet been taken. This is a great opportunity to choose a date that you

really like for your Ling Lunch presentation next semester, so maybe today is a good day to start thinking about it.

Have Fun!



News from Our Alumni

By **Duk-Ho An**

When I was a first year student, which is—gosh—six years ago, there were so many homeworks every week, which I guess is not so different these days as well. At that time, most of my classmates lived in the grad dorm, so we would often meet in the lounge or sometimes in the department at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning to talk about homework questions. Of course, that often has some impact on your physical well-being—we often felt like (or looked like (?)) zombies. One day, in class, we whined to Howard, then a regular faculty of the department, that we were too busy and that we had no life... Howard replied “well, you’d better get used to it because you will just get busier and busier in your life.”

I think Howard was right. I realize that the life of a first year faculty is (in some respects) tougher, and certainly much busier, than that of a first year grad student, and I am not quite sure if things will get easier (in the relevant respects) when I get older.

Well, these are just my complaints actually... ☹

The real point I wanted to make is that here in Toronto, though it's been only three months, I already realize how valuable the things are that I learned at UConn. Not to brag about myself, and obviously there is still a lot for me to learn, but I realize that I did learn a great deal at UConn.

Sometimes, you will feel like zombies. Sometimes, you will feel that there is no life for grad students—especially, if you are in Storrs (a.k.a. in the middle of nowhere). But I'd like to suggest you to try to enjoy and appreciate what you already have there – that is, your excellent colleagues and wonderful teachers.*

That is us. That's our tradition.

from Toronto
November 09, 2007

Duk-Ho An

(* I was tempted to add here “and only one Chinese restaurant.” No offense, dude.)

Our Old Colleague

By **Masahiko Aihara**

I have some side story for the trip to NELS 38: Yes, I met our (4th years') old colleague, Jong-Un (Park) there!

In the conference banquet, we talked a lot about how hard our life in Storrs was in our first year (but we somehow miss our good old (and hard) days...), and about how he has been doing in Georgetown. Jong-Un is in his third year now at Georgetown University and is still working on syntax, also showing his interest in event semantics. He has been especially happy recently because his wife, Sunny, has finally started her Ph.D study in acquisition in Georgetown. They are now busy working on Linguistics and enjoying their life in DC.

I was very surprised and was also excited to see Jong-Un presenting his work VERY professionally in the conference. I thought about myself after I met him and asked myself whether I came to be able to work on Linguistics that professionally now. Anyways, here is a proof of our reunion that occurred two and a half year after Jong-Un's leaving Storrs ;-).



The scene of the fall



How I Spent My Sabbatical (2006 ~ 2007)

By Harry van der Hulst

“Although I’ve been a professor since 1985, this was going to be my first real sabbatical leave.”

After 6 years (or 12 semesters) of teaching, UConn professors get one semester ‘off’ (i.e., no teaching, no administrative duties) to focus on research. Most universities in the US have a system of this sort, although I hear that in some places you get two semesters. Luckily, I *did* manage to stay away (or at least keep a low profile) for a whole year because I received an additional grant from the Provost (for which I had applied) which allowed me to get a second semester ‘semi-off’ (i.e., no teaching), just admin and research. Although I’ve been a professor since 1985, this was going to be my first *real* sabbatical leave. In Holland we didn’t have a formal sabbatical system, although you could look for ‘opportunities’. In 1990-1991 I applied for a one year stay at the *Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies* (NIAS) where, together with my friend, the late syntactician Teun Hoekstra, I led a research group on language acquisition which involved a lot of organizing, arranging, learning and talking to very interesting researchers, not leaving much time for my own research. Then in 1999-2000, I got another year off after having been Director of *The Holland Institute for Linguistics* (HIL) for a couple of years, but during *that* year I transitioned to the US. In the summer of 1999, we moved to Saratoga Springs (upstate NY) where I was appointed as a guest professor at *Skidmore College* (being the third and last “Distinguished Visiting Fellow in the Arts and Sciences” for a three year project on the theme of creativity in Art and Science, funded by the Luce Foundation). In addition to my work at the College and having two exhibitions of my ‘art work’, I gave talks at various linguistic departments because I was looking for a permanent position on the east coast (which, lucky enough for me, the people in Storrs were willing to create). Again, even though I loved my stay and interdisciplinary work at Skidmore, my very diverse excursions into everything but linguistics did not leave me with much time to focus on my linguistic research. Needless to say that my first 6 years in Storrs, while keeping my research and publications going, have not been the most quiet in my life time, setting up a new home, having to adjust to the American way of life and of teaching, and, not in the least because Nancy and I had three children which were ‘added’ to the four we already had (some of which are grown ups and thus not our daily ‘dependents’).

So, last year, several months before my sabbatical started, I had a list of ambitious plans, two of which being fairly concrete. My first plan was to write a monograph on *Dependency Phonology*, an approach to phonological representations which, as the word says, relies heavily on the idea that each combination of whatever units (elements, phonemes, syllabic constituents, syllables, feet etc.) involves an asymmetrical relation in which one unit is the head and the other the dependent. Even though versions of this idea are around (sometimes only implicitly) in several models, DP (as well as the related approach called *Government Phonology*) applies it consistently. (The even bigger claim is that dependency (or headedness) is an overall property of grammar, if not of the mind at large.) I have been working within this approach, modifying it, developing my own version of it (especially with respect to intra-segmental structure) since the mid-eighties and even though I have continuously reported on this work in articles and book chapters, I felt that the time was ripe to come out with a book. My second plan was to write a popular book (a ‘trade book’) about phonology with the title *The Meaningless Side of Language*. Now, if you want to

See **Sabbatical Year** page 5



*“My second plan was to write a popular book (a ‘trade book’) about phonology with the title **The Meaningless Side of Language**.”*



Sabbatical Year *continued from page 4*

publish a trade book, they say that you need a literary agent, simply because big (non-academic) publishing houses that have a wide network do not talk to authors directly. You also need to write a 'book proposal' to which end you can consult books with titles such as 'How to Write a Book Proposal'. Since the champion of trade books on linguistics is Steven Pinker (to whom our field owes a lot), I asked him who *he* was working with and he was kind enough to introduce me to his agency, which represents a long list of high profile, best selling science writers. Using ideas that I'd been collecting for a long time and reading one book on how to write a book proposal, I spent four weeks on writing an actual 20 page book proposal. I submitted it and then, not expecting an immediate reply, I used the waiting time to finish a couple of articles that badly needed finishing. (One of those articles deals with the Dutch diminutive suffix which I wrote in honor of my thesis supervisor Jan Kooij, who in September 2005 had rather suddenly died.) After several weeks, I got my answer: "We'll pass. The subject matter seems too technical for a trade book." To make a long story short, despite these discouraging words, I felt that my plan was worthwhile and I now have a manuscript of about 400 pages which, I'm sure, will take me another two or three years to expand, trim and fine tune. Of course, I meanwhile need to find a publisher, but I trust that this will happen, although I suspect that it will be an academic publisher rather than one of those big commercial publishing houses. What about the Dependency book? I did a fair amount of work on that one too, merging my model on intra-segmental structure (called *Radical CV Theory*) with a number of case studies on vowel harmony processes (one of my other long standing projects), which always have been excellent phenomena to test what phonological models can do. I suspect that to finish this book I need another year or two. (I am now thinking about the idea to discuss this DP work in my Fall 2008 seminar.)

What else did I do? Besides building a shed in my yard, I have worked on three other projects. Another of my research lines is 'stress' (more precisely *word accent*). With two of my Dutch colleagues I am in the process of editing a mammoth book called *Word Accentual Systems of the World's Languages*, which contains ten chapters written by various experts on word accentual systems in the various continents or regions of the world, as well as extracts from a database on word accentual systems (called *StressTyp*) that my Dutch colleague Rob Goedemans and I have been working on since the early nineties. I'm writing the chapter on Europe and collaborating on a chapter on Asia. We hope to complete this project in the course of 2008. The second project that needed my attention lies in the area of *sign language*, specifically sign phonology. Just before my sabbatical started I got an NSF grant to do sign phonology research (collaborating with Rachel Channon) which was nice (especially because one of the casualties of coming to the US was that I had to leave behind my Dutch Sign Phonology research group), but it also implied that I had to spend part of my sabbatical on this project which involves building a cross-linguistic database (called *SignTyp*) in which the phonetic and phonological properties of signs in different sign languages are coded. Among others, we held a workshop in January 2007 for which we had invited experts on (sign)database systems and a few sign phonologists. (This coming June (26-28th) we'll be hosting a conference on sign language phonology here in Storrs.) The third project relates to Ling 101, a course that I like very much because it provides a perfect excuse to dabble into other people's disciplines (a recommendable distraction from linguistics which I got addicted to during my Skidmore year, and which, in the end, enriched my understanding of it.) A couple of years ago, I started writing a text for this course which led to the text book *A Mind for Language*, which (after it went through a revised second edition) I decided to split up into *two* text books, one called *Linguistic Structures* (an introduction to the organization of the mental grammar and linguistic representations) and the other (which deals with the Innateness Hypothesis), under the original title. I will be using these two textbooks in the coming Spring semester.

Last, but not least, since I was mostly working at home, I had lots of opportunity to see Serena (who was born on April 19th 2006), grow past her first birthday into her second year of life. Of all the things I did during my sabbatical, I enjoyed that the most.



*"What else did I do?
Besides building a shed in
my yard, I have worked on
three other projects."*



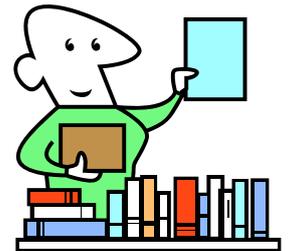
It's Never too Early to Start Your Teaching Portfolio

"A teaching portfolio can be an important tool for candidates being considered for a job, promotion, or tenure."

By **Cynthia Zocca**

A teaching portfolio can be an important tool for candidates being considered for a job, promotion, or tenure. Because a portfolio is a compilation of information that can concern several years of an instructor's life, it is a good idea to start putting it together, or at least keeping it in mind, as soon as possible. Since the last few weeks of the semester are a great time to start thinking about your portfolio, here are a few things that grad students from all years can do.

1. Think about what "effective teaching" means to you - your teaching philosophy
Even if you never compile a full portfolio, something that will almost certainly be asked of you at some point is your "statement of teaching philosophy". This is a brief document (no more than a page) that explains your personal beliefs about teaching. The advantage of thinking about it early is that as you teach each semester you can adapt your statement according to the experience you've had in teaching each course. When we are forced to write down what we believe is good teaching, we are also forced to reflect on our previous work and to observe more critically the work of our own instructors past or present. In our role as students we can always tell what we like or don't like! There is no clear recipe of how to write a statement of teaching philosophy, but here are a few questions to consider. Think about a particular teacher or teachers that you look up to. What are some of the things they did? Did they follow some kind of routine every class? How did they interact with the students? Then answer similar questions about a teacher or teachers you did not like. Based on your answers, what are some things you try or want to try to incorporate into your own teaching? Is there anything else you would add?



Start to file everything!

"One easy way of evaluating your performance as a teacher is your students' evaluations."

2. Show you are effective!

One easy way of evaluating your performance as a teacher is your students' evaluations. The most obvious kind of evaluation is the official one students fill out at the end of the course. But there is more you can do. Throughout the course, do smaller informal feedback sessions, which can help you in two ways: you can use students' comments to make changes before it's too late, and you have extra documentation. Unsolicited, or apparently unsolicited, compliments are very significant, so always encourage your students to write to you or to the head of the department when they like something. If you are a TA for 102 or 103, ask the students you helped personally to write you a few lines. Also, ask the main instructor to give you written feedback on your work. If you are a 101 TA, do some extra class evaluation in your own sections. One more thing to do is try to track down how many of your students ended up having a Linguistics major (Ling/Psych or Ling/Phil) or minor. Finally, try to find out how your students' performances compare to students in other courses or sections. This is pretty easy in LING 101, because the printout of the student grades that we get from the computer center gives that information. Also, in the summary of your official evaluations there is a section that shows how your scores compare to the average of the department. If it is in your favor, make sure to highlight that.

See **Teaching Portfolio** page 7



Teaching Portfolio *continued from page 6*

3. Keep records and copies of everything

Here are a few things you should keep copies of: official evaluations, syllabi of courses you taught, handouts that you designed, students' comments on feedback sessions. If a student says something nice on an e-mail, make a copy of it too. If you are using HuskyCT and something interesting comes up in a discussion there, keep records. Remember, you might not include all this material in your portfolio, but it's always good to have more material to choose from when deciding what to keep. Finally, if you are comfortable with it, record a few of your classes and keep the ones you like.

Check <http://itl.uconn.edu/tas/portfolios.htm> for help with portfolios right here at UConn. All these suggestions are things that do not take too much time or effort if they are done step by step, but can be really hard if in your fifth year you decide to do it all at once. So think long term and start planning right now!



Student Accomplishments

Conference Presentations

- Aihara, Masahiko. 2007. Two Types of Japanese Negative Yes-No Questions. The 17th Japanese Korean Linguistics Conference (JK17). University of California, Los Angeles, California, USA. (November 9-11)
- Aihara, Masahiko. 2007. (Un)biased Negative Yes-No Questions in Japanese. The 38th Annual Meeting of the North East Linguistic Society (NELS 38). University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. (October 26-28)
- Aihara, Masahiko. 2007. (Un)biased Negative Yes-No Questions in Japanese. The South New England Workshop in Semantics (SNEWS 2007). MIT, Massachusetts, USA. (October 20)
- Fitzgibbons, Natalia. 2007. N-words and negative heads in Russian. Presented at the Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics 7 conference, University of Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany, November 30 - December 2.
- Kuo, Pei-Jung. 2007. English Existential Construction as Locative Inversion: Evidence from Acquisitional Data. Poster presented at the 2007 Western Conference on Linguistics (WECOL 2007), San Diego, December 1, 2007.
- Kuo, Pei-Jung. 2007. The Preposed Object in Mandarin Chinese and Southern Min. Paper presented at the 31st Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Provinces Linguistic Association (ALPA31), Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, November 3, 2007.
- Tarasenkova, Oksana. 2007. Acquisition of Gender in Russian. Presented at Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 32), Boston University, November 2-4, 2007
- Zocca, Cynthia. 2007. The Q-Operator in Brazilian Portuguese. Talk given at the III Graduate Portuguese and Hispanic Symposium, September, Georgetown University.

Departmental Presentations

- Crawford, Jean. 2007. The acquisition of causatives and applicatives: the case of child Sesotho. Presented at the UConn-UMass-Smith Language Acquisition Workshop, December 1, 2007.

Publications

- Aihara, Masahiko. Under review. The Scope of '-est': Evidence from Japanese. submitted to Natural Language Semantics.
- Tarasenkova, Oksana. To appear. 2008. Acquisition of Gender in Russian. In: Proceedings of Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 32).

Invited Talk

- Herdan, Simona. 2007. Relativizer Restrictions and Amount Relatives. Paper presented at the NYU Syntax Brown Bag. October 5. New York University, NY.



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See us at:

<http://linguistics.uconn.edu/>

Reflections from a former Department Head

By **Diane Lillo-Martin**

I like the view
From Arjona 304
It reminds me of
What I'm not doing any more.

Much has changed in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Connecticut since I became department head in 1995. We had been six full-time faculty members – Crain, Lasnik, Lillo-Martin, Mattingly, Michaels, Saito – with Anderson, Bar-Shalom and Simons-Marques as adjuncts. In the years following, replacements, retirements and new hires led to the current staff. Our areas of specialization included phonetics but not semantics. We were in Monteith – the *short* wing of the second floor – and now we occupy all of the third floor of Arjona.

And yet, much has remained the same. We still focus on theoretical generative approaches to language structure and psycholinguistics. We still focus on training Ph.D. students from all over the world, who still conduct high-class, theoretically-driven linguistics research. We're still considered one of the best programs at the university, and we continue to strive to be one of the best generative linguistics programs there is.

When I took on the headship at such a tender age, I told many people that I wouldn't have done it if it weren't for our department's practice of group decision-making, consensus building and coherence in approach. I still value these concepts and marvel at our ability to continue using them. I've learned a lot about how the university works, and served on quite a few university committees and groups – some of whose work I am actually glad to have been a part of.

I certainly gained a lot from the experience of being department head, but it is time for another to benefit from this experience. William has great ideas, energy, and leadership skills, and I am delighted to have him as our new head. Now, though, when I look out the window, I think about the papers, reviews, student meetings, classes, committee work, etc., on my plate – but *not* going to the next department head meeting, responding to emails from the Dean's office, and dealing with all the issues involved in being department head. And I smile.

Diane