

WINTER 2024

LINGUISTICS

NEWSLETTER



LSA

LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



U-M Linguistics at the 2024 LSA Annual Meeting



Inside this Issue

Letter from the Chair	3
Natasha Abner in <i>Science</i>	4
Faculty Research Showcase	4
LSA Annual Meeting	4
Jessi Grieser in <i>Smithsonian Magazine</i>	4
Robin Queen named Collegiate Professor	5
Andrew McInnerney publishes with Cambridge	5
In Memoriam	5
Talking Black in America	6
Olawale Akingbade's Fieldwork	6
Cecilia Solís-Barroso Inducted into Bouchet Graduate Honor Society	6
Martin Mössmer published in <i>Journal of Child Language</i>	6
Beatrice Oshika Scholarship	7
Congratulations Fall '23 Grads	7
Past Events	8
Upcoming Events	9
Alumni Profiles	10
Get Involved	13



Letter from the Chair

Dear friends,

It is really a pleasure to share another issue of our U-Michigan Linguistics Alumni newsletter with you.

Even if it is not about Linguistics, it is great to have an exciting, exceptional U-M event as the backdrop to another newsletter, with the 2024 Michigan Wolverines winning the college football National Championship after 26 years. In fact, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer took it to be so memorable that she [proclaimed January 9 Wolverine Day in Michigan](#), following the Wolverines' victory. Now you have a Wolverines reason to be in Ann Arbor on January 9 each year!

On the Linguistics front, around the same time in January, a large number of our graduate students, faculty and alumni attended and presented at the Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America in New York City. This year's Annual Meeting also celebrated 100 years of the Linguistic Society. As a special opportunity for U-M Linguistics to celebrate at the Annual Meeting, PhD alumna Kelly Wright received a Best Paper Award for the publication in Language of her paper "[Housing Policy & Linguistic Profiling: An Audit Study of Three American Dialects](#)".

You will see in the following pages more news about other important accomplishments by our faculty and

students. Our colleague Professor Robin Queen has been awarded a Collegiate Professorship, and is now the Sarah G. Thomason Collegiate Professor of Linguistics. You may see this newsletter in time to attend the [inaugural Collegiate Professor Lectures](#) by Professor Queen and another U-M linguist, and alumna, Professor Anne Curzan. Another Wolverine linguistics achievement to mention, Associate Professor Natasha Abner, also a U-M Linguistics alumna, led the publication of the paper "[Computational phylogenetics reveal histories of sign languages](#)" in the prestigious journal Science.

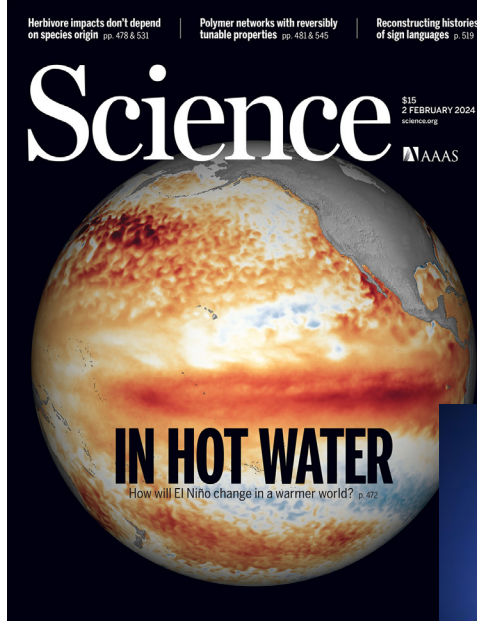
But we also have sad news about a U-M linguist. Associate Professor Emeritus John Lawler passed away on November 25, 2023. Professor Lawler was a very popular and esteemed instructor among Linguistics students, including many of you who were at U-M before he retired in 2009 after 37 years of teaching in the Department. Condolences to John Lawler's family and friends.

Among the events happening in the department, in October 2023, we held a Department Faculty Research Showcase where many of our faculty presented some of their ongoing research to the linguistics community at U-M. This year, two large conferences are being organized by our faculty and students: the [37th HSP - Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing](#), in May, and the [FEAST - Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory](#), in August. Check the following pages for other news about our faculty and students, closing with featured profiles of a few of your fellow alumni.

Finally, I welcome you to send us at linguistics@umich.edu comments and suggestions for future issues or to tell us if you would like to be [featured](#) in a future issue.

Go Blue!

Acrisio Pires
Chair, Department of Linguistics



Natasha Abner in Science

Recently showcased on the cover of *Science*, Associate Professor [Natasha Abner](#) led a team of linguists and mathematicians in a study that applies computational phylogenetic methods to study the historical development and evolutionary interrelations of sign languages worldwide.

ALSO FEATURED IN POPSCI

Faculty Research Showcase

The Linguistics Department hosted its inaugural Faculty Showcase on October 27, 2023. This event aimed at enhancing visibility and collaboration within the department. Many of our faculty presented their ongoing research to colleagues and students. The [diversity of topics](#) highlighted the breadth of interests and expertise within the department – ranging from syntax and phonetics, to computational linguistics and sociolinguistics – and offered a special opportunity for students to see applications of linguistic theory and methodology first hand, potentially seeding academic future collaborations and mentorships.



LSA Annual Meeting

This year marked the centennial of LSA and many graduate students and faculty from the department participated in the 2024 Linguistic Society of America's Annual Meeting. In addition to the presentations given by U-M Linguistics students and faculty, PhD Student [Aya Halabi](#) received the inaugural Travel Award from [COGEL The Committee on Gender Equity in Linguistics](#). PhD alumna Kelly Wright was awarded the [Best Paper in Language Award](#).

READ MORE



Jessi Grieser in Smithsonian Magazine

Associate Professor [Jessi Grieser](#) consulted along with sociolinguists from around the US about the California Vowel Shift, African American Englishes, Language ideologies, and more, for the article "A Brief History of the United States' Accents and Dialects."

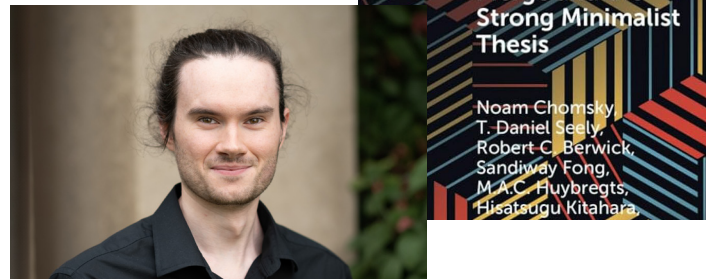
READ THE ARTICLE



Robin Queen named Collegiate Professor

[Robin Queen](#) recently received the honor of being named as an [LSA Collegiate Professor](#). The Collegiate Professorship is the college's highest faculty honor, awarded to faculty who demonstrate a sustained record of excellence in research and scholarship, in teaching, in service, and in other contributions to the university. Congratulations to Robin on this very well-deserved recognition! Collegiate Professorships are named after former U-M faculty. Robin chose to name her position after another esteemed colleague and is now the "Sarah G. Thomason Collegiate Professor of Linguistics". Robin will deliver her Collegiate Professorship Inaugural Lecture on Monday, March 11.

[ATTEND VIRTUALLY](#)



Andrew McInnerney publishes with Cambridge

Lecturer [Andrew McInnerney](#), who is a Linguistics PhD alumnus, recently published, in Cambridge University Press series Elements in Generative Syntax. The monograph, "Merge and the Strong Minimalist Thesis", also includes co-authors Noam Chomsky, our EMU colleague Daniel Seely, and Yushi Sugimoto, who is also a U-M Linguistics PhD alumnus.

[READ MORE](#)

In Memoriam



Associate Professor Emeritus John Lawler passed away on November 25, 2023

Dr. John Lawler identified himself as a general practitioner of linguistics. He studied the processes of metaphor in relation to lexicon and grammar from a cognitive perspective. He was particularly curious about embodied metaphors, and those underlying mathematics, computing, and epistemology. In addition, he had a special interest in popular English grammar, and in extending the scope and quality of linguistic education in American culture. He had interests in semantic problems of computer lexicography and user interface design, and Indonesian linguistics (particularly Malay and Acehnese). Professor Lawler was a very popular instructor among Linguistics students, including many of you who studied at U-M before he retired in 2009.

Talking Black in America

Graduate students [Dominique Canning](#), [Sovoya Davis](#), and [Kendall Lowe](#) participated in a panel to discuss the film "[Talking Black in America](#)" and answered questions related to Black languages. The film provides an overview of African American Language by exploring its origins, the circumstances that shape the language, and the influence it has on other varieties of English.

LEARN MORE



Olawale Akingbade's Fieldwork

Graduate student [Olawale Akingbade](#) has received two prestigious grants to support his research in Africa: the Global Individual Grant from the U-M International Institute and a grant from the U-M African Studies Center. Both grants are designed to support students who plan on conducting research abroad.

READ MORE



Cecilia Solís-Barroso Inducted to Bouchet Honor Society

PhD Candidate [Cecilia Solís-Barroso](#) was recently selected for induction into the Bouchet Graduate Honor Society at the University of Michigan. She was selected from among an impressive group of extraordinary candidates after a careful review process.

FIND OUT MORE



Martin Mössmer published in Journal of Child Language

Graduate Student [Martin Mössmer](#) was a co-authored on a paper published in the Cambridge University Press Journal of Child Language. The paper is titled "Mean Length of Utterance: A study of early language development in four Southern Bantu languages".

READ MORE

Recent PhD Graduates

Tzu-Yun Tung

Advisor: Jon Brennan

"Prediction and Memory Retrieval in Dependency Resolution"

Justin Craft

Advisors: Pam Beddor and Jon Brennan

"The Effect of Listener Experience and Social Expectation on Illusory Percepts"



Photos from recent Department of Linguistics events



Beatrice Oshika Scholarship

This year, the Linguistics Department awarded the Beatrice Oshika Scholarship for Undergraduate Study in Linguistics to several excellent undergraduate majors in Linguistics. The scholarship, generously supported by a gift from PhD alumna Dr. Beatrice Oshika, Emeritus Professor Emerita of Applied Linguistics at Portland State University, will be awarded annually to U-M Linguistics majors who are residents of Michigan and qualify for need-based financial aid. The award will reduce the amount of loans or work study included in students' loan packages. We are very grateful to Dr. Oshika for providing us with this opportunity to support the education of Linguistics students!

Congratulations Fall '23 Grads

Congratulations to the [Fall 2023 class of Linguistics](#) at the University of Michigan. We would like to extend our warmest regards and best wishes to these bright minds as they embark on their next chapters. Their future endeavors will surely reflect the strong foundation built during their time at U-M, further enriching the field.

PAST EVENTS

(formal) Approaches to South Asian Languages 13

The 13th [\(f\)ASAL](#) was hosted at the University of Michigan March 31 - April 2nd, 2023, organized by Assistant Professor [Savithry Namboodiripad](#) and many [graduate students](#) and staff. The special theme was “language contact and multilingualism.”



2024 MLK Colloquium

On January 19, 2024 the Department of Linguistics hosted the annual MLK Colloquium. We were joined by Professor Quenton Williams from the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Professor Williams’ colloquium centered around the liberation and recognition of Kaaps, a language variety in post-apartheid South Africa. He discussed the history of Kaaps from its origins as a slave lingua franca to its contemporary status, including its literary presence and social significance. Williams also outlined ongoing projects to further empower Kaaps speakers, such as the creation of a trilingual dictionary, development of bilingual educational materials, and the establishment of a Society for the Advancement of Kaaps.

[WATCH COLLOQUIUM](#)



North American Computational Linguistics Open Competition

The [North American Computational Linguistics Open Competition \(NACLO\)](#) is a challenge where high schoolers tackle linguistic puzzles, gaining insights into language variation and uniformity, while honing their reasoning abilities. This contest has become a catalyst for encouraging some of the brightest students to pursue advanced studies and careers in linguistics and related disciplines. It offers students a preview of what it’s like to work with natural language processing in today’s technological era. For many years, the Linguistics Department at the University of Michigan has organized and hosted part of the local stages of NACLO, and this year continues that tradition by hosting both the preliminary open round and the exclusive invitation rounds.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2024 Colloquium Schedule

Join us on Zoom or In-Person on campus in East Hall 4448. All colloquiums run 4:30PM - 5:30PM.

March 15th	Jessi Grieser, <i>University of Michigan</i>
March 22nd	Rezenet Moges-Riedel, <i>California State University, Long Beach</i>
April 12th	Graduate Student Colloquium

Watch our Colloquia today!

COLLOQUIUM YOUTUBE

Graduation Winter 2024 May 3, 2024

The [2024 Linguistics graduating class](#) would appreciate hearing about the experiences and advice from Linguistics alumni at this most special occasion. Share your experiences and advice with us via [email](#).

Human Sentence Processing Conference May 16-18, 2024

The 37th Annual Conference on [Human Sentence Processing](#) will be hosted at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

FEAST Conference August 6-8, 2024

For its 11th meeting, the [Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory conference \(FEAST\)](#) will be hosted at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.



A decade of impact,
driven by you ♥

GIVING BLUEDAY 03.13
2024

GIVE TO SHAPE THE NEXT 10 YEARS

ALUMNI PROFILES



Lauren Squires
PhD, Class of 2011

Advisors: Robin Queen and Julie Boland

Student activities/involvement

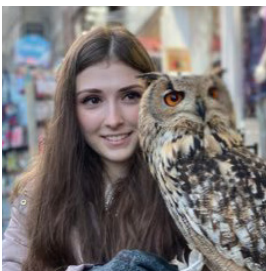
I was very involved in the Graduate Employees' Organization, serving twice as Grievance Chair and as a member of the Bargaining Team. In the Linguistics department, I served on committees including two years as the Colloquium Committee Co-Chair. I was also fortunate to be Editorial Assistant for two years for the *Journal of English Linguistics*.

Since graduating from U-M:

After graduating from Michigan I began a job as Assistant Professor in the English department at the University of North Carolina Wilmington; a year later, I became Assistant Professor in the English Department at The Ohio State University. I was promoted to Associate Professor in 2017 and have held a courtesy appointment with OSU's Department of Linguistics since 2019. One of the favorite things I've done since graduating is co-teach a course at the 2013 Linguistic Institute at UM with Julie Boland! I also served as Book Review Editor for *Language*, the journal of the Linguistic Society of America (2018-2020).

How has your U-M linguistics degree influenced your career path?

One of the best things about a Michigan linguistics degree is the breadth it offers, and the inherent interdisciplinarity within the department and the university. This helped me explore many different interests and think about many different possible careers with linguistics as a base. As I have found myself with a career teaching in an English department, I think back to how UM Linguistics prepared me to be both a specialist and a generalist, able to communicate with people across the field and beyond.



Kaitlyn Ryda
BA, Class of 2019

Advisor: Elaine McNulty

Since graduating from U-M:

I started off working in Project Management out of U-M and did that for a few years before deciding to go to grad school in Linguistics to pursue my Master's. I started my MPhil in Linguistics at the University of Oxford in England in the fall of 2022.

Current Research:

I am primarily focused on English syntax, with secondary concentrations in Psycholinguistics and Semantics. I do syntax within the Minimalist framework, and am very interested in formal descriptions of English constructions utilizing Minimalist explanation. My thesis topic is concerned with the subjecthood of expletives in meteorological constructions - specifically, whether the "it" in "it rains" is a true expletive subject (like with "it seems...") or if it is a special category of subject with its own unique set of licensed syntactic processes that it can participate in, which are distinct from the standard expletive. In addition, my other topics of inquiry are: The necessity of the Extended Projection Principle in syntactic theory with an explicit description of Locative Inversion in English; Agreement attraction issues with post-verbal subjects in sentences with expletive "there"; Negative Polarity Items.

How has your U-M linguistics degree influenced your career path?

My career and academic path undoubtedly was made possible by my time at the University of Michigan. Michigan's Linguistics program was truly excellent and I felt it properly prepared me for continuing my education. My time at U-M taught me the most important skill you can have in any line of academic inquiry: how to think critically about various topics and problems in the field. When I find a question, I feel like I have the skills and curiosity to pursue an answer. It's invaluable, and I will always be grateful to my U-M professors for teaching me.



Ana Cristina Ostermann

PhD, Class of 2000

Advisor: Deborah Keller-Cohen

Student activities/involvement

I remember having been involved in a few student activities, but I honestly cannot remember them all -- it's been 23 years already! However, I clearly remember that, together with other contemporary Ph.D. students -- Stephanie Lindemann, Didar Akar, and Elizabeth Axelson, just to name a few -- I organized a weekly reading and discussion group. The focus then was to discuss Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis, and Critical Discourse Analysis, as those were topics of interest to a number of us back then.

I also worked as a teaching and research assistant at the English Language Institute (ELI), under the guidance of Professor John Swales, who was also a very important mentor to me. ELI was another site of professional and personal growth for me, and where I made friends for life!

I also had the opportunity to be an editorial assistant to the Language Learning Journal. This was also a tremendous honor and, once again, an unprecedented learning opportunity. I also helped the then editor organize the journal conference, which offered me the chance to meet in person, at the early stage of my doctoral degree, numerous authors whom I wouldn't otherwise have a chance to meet.

Since graduating from U-M:

I currently hold a position of Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). In 2007, I became a National Research Fellow for the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), and was promoted to Senior Fellow in 2017.

In 2008–2009, I received a grant to work as a Visiting Researcher at the Department of Sociology and Applied Linguistics at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), USA, and in 2017–2018, as a Visiting Researcher at the Center for Research on Communication and Culture at the University of Loughborough, United Kingdom.

I was elected President of the International Gender and Language Association (IGALA) in 2010, and Vice-President of the International Society for Conversation Analysis-ISCA from 2018 to 2023. In 2013, I received the award of Distinguished Researcher by the Foundation for Research Support of Rio Grande do Sul (FAPERGS), Brazil. I received a Distinguished Researcher Award from the Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos), Brazil, in 2015 and 2018. I was a TEDx speaker in 2017.

Current research and professional interests:

Currently, most of my research is developed with an ethnomethodological (Multimodal) Conversation Analytic (CA) perspective. Among the contexts I have investigated are the Brazilian Ministry of Health public telephone helpline, hospital departments (fetal medicine, genetic consultations, ultrasound exams), health clinics (gynecology and obstetrics), police stations, emergency dispatch centers, and courtrooms, among others. Currently, I am investigating doctors' communication over the phone with families of COVID-19 patients in intensive care units (ICUs).

How has your U-M linguistics degree influenced your career path?

Obtaining my Ph.D. from the University of Michigan has influenced my career path in so numerous and such important ways that I could write a paper just describing all of them! I feel I had the best possible training in a broad range of disciplines while also getting specialized training on what interested me most. This regarded not only content but also research methodologies, analytical reasoning, writing and presentation skills, research, and work ethics. I enrolled not only in classes offered by the Linguistics Program but also in other Programs and Schools. In all of them, I had incredibly well-qualified professors, and this alone would have already made my whole doctoral experience worthwhile.

My experience at U-M linguistics has influenced me to use best practices at all times while doing research. It has also shown me, in practice, how to be in the position of being a principal investigator and coordinate a research group of my own.

I also had a chance to learn from my dissertation advisor, Deborah Keller-Cohen, how to intellectually instigate an advisee and to provide them with ample opportunities, while offering support whenever needed. Debby was of huge

Ana Cristina Ostermann *Continued*

importance also in my professional development and career after I finished my Ph.D., making herself available whenever I sought her advice.

Finally, I want to highlight something that should not be taken for granted. My first experience participating in international conferences happened as a Linguistics Ph.D. student at the U-M -- not one, but several of them, and since year 1! During my Ph.D., they were always funded by U-M Linguistics or Rackham. By attending and presenting at international conferences, I became more and more a "member" of the academic community, something that shaped my research and professional trajectory.



Andrew Lamont

BA, Class of 2012

Since graduating from U-M:

I was a member of the Linguistics Club and was involved in NACLO as a problem tester and grader. After graduating, I helped to edit and typeset the NACLO booklets for a few years and am now getting involved in UKLO – the United Kingdom's equivalent.

Since graduating from U-M:

I received a PhD in linguistics from University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2022 and am now a lecturer (=assistant professor in the USA) at University College London.

Current Research:

I've always loved puzzles, and my favorite problems to work on are phonological patterns that are complex and difficult to crack. I'm currently working on stress-epenthesis interactions in Mohawk (Iroquoian), stress-reduplication interactions in Mayo (Uto-Aztecan), tone in Poko (Skou), and of course the diminutive in Afrikaans (Indo-European), which I have been asking Andries Coetzee about for the last ten years or so.

How has your U-M linguistics degree influenced your career path?

I remember asking Andries [Coetzee] once what geminates are and his response was 'nobody knows'. That has had a huge impact on how I think about linguistics. Even after all these years, there are still things that appear banal and simple, but they are still puzzling. It's inspiring and humbling to know that there are still plenty of mysteries to explore.

The Department of Linguistics at the University of Michigan is one of the few departments in the United States that captures the inherent breadth of the discipline by exploring the cognitive, interactional, cultural, and developmental aspects of language. Faculty and students explore language structure, history, knowledge, behavior, and use. Faculty research aims to integrate these diverse approaches to language in ways that engender new modes of linguistics inquiry and new research domains.

Get Involved

Gift & Donation Opportunities

[EXPLORE GIVING](#)

Share Your News With Us

[SUBMIT NEWS TODAY](#)

Connect with Current Undergraduates

[LSA CONNECT](#)

Have an Internship or Job Opportunity?

[EMAIL US](#)

Join Departmental Colloquia

[ADD TO CALENDAR](#)

University of Michigan
611 Tappan Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Phone: 734.764.0353
Fax: 734.936.3406
Email: linguistics@umich.edu

