

Natasha R. Abner

Interests

Sign languages, morpho-syntax, syntax-semantics interface, language development & emergence.

Employment

- 2017–present **University of Michigan**, Ann Arbor, MI.
Assistant Professor
Linguistics Department
[Sign Language & Multi-Modal Communication Lab](#)
[Language Across Modalities](#)
- 2014–2017 **Montclair State University**, Montclair, NJ.
Assistant Professor
Linguistics Department
- 2012–2014 **University of Chicago**, Chicago, IL.
Postdoctoral Scholar
Goldin-Meadow Laboratory
Department of Psychology

Education

- 2007–2012 **PhD in Linguistics.**
University of California, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA
- Fall 2010 **Visiting student.**
Département d'études cognitives
École normale supérieure
Paris, France
- 2001–2005 **BA in Linguistics, Summa Cum Laude.**
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Ann Arbor, MI

Theses

Dissertation

Title *There Once Was a Verb: The Predicative Core of Possessive and Nominalization Structures in American Sign Language*

Committee Hilda Koopman and Edward Stabler (chairs), Karen Emmorey, and Edward Keenan

Master's Thesis

Title *Right Where You Belong: Right Peripheral WH-Elements and the WH-Question Paradigm in American Sign Language*

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Committee Edward Stabler and Anoop Mahajan (chairs), and Pamela Munro

Honor's Thesis

Title *Resultatives Gone Minimal*

Advisors Acrisio Pires and Samuel Epstein

Grants & Awards

- 2019 Honored Instructor *University of Michigan*
- 2018 New Initiative New Infrastructure (NINI) Grant (\$12,500) *University of Michigan*
- 2016 Summer Grant Proposal Development Award *Montclair State University*
- 2011–2012 Dissertation Year Fellowship *UCLA*
- 2010–2011 Charles E. and Sue K. Young Award *UCLA*
- o Awarded annually to one student from the UCLA Humanities Division for exemplary achievement in scholarship, teaching, and University citizenship.
- 2010 Mellon Pre-Dissertation Fellowship *UCLA*
- 2009 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship *UCLA*
- 2009 Peter Ladefoged Research Grant *UCLA, Linguistics Department*
- 2008 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship *UCLA*
- 2007–2009 Cota Robles Fellowship *UCLA*
- 2005 Virginia Voss Award for Excellence in Academic Writing *University of Michigan*
- 2005 Outstanding Graduating Senior *University of Michigan, Linguistics Department*
- 2001–2005 James B. Angell Scholar *University of Michigan*

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

- 2018 Cooperrider, K., N. Abner, and S. Goldin-Meadow. [The Palm-Up Puzzle: Meanings and Origins of a Widespread Form in Gesture and Sign](#). *Frontiers in Communication* 3.23. doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2018.00023
2017. Abner, N. [What You See Is What You Get: Surface Transparency and Ambiguity of Nominalizing Reduplication in American Sign Language](#). *Syntax* 20(4), 317-352.
- 2015 Abner, N., K. Cooperrider, and S. Goldin-Meadow. [Gesture for Linguists: A Handy Primer](#). *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 9(11), 437–451.
- 2013 Abner, N. [Gettin' Together a POSSE: The Primacy of Predication in ASL Possessives](#). *Sign Language and Linguistics* 16(2), 125–156
- o Reprinted in [Signs and Structures: Formal Approaches to Sign Language Syntax](#)

Peer-Reviewed Book Chapters

- 2017 Abner, N. [Syntactic Categorization in Sign Languages](#). In *Handbook of Categorization in Cognitive Science (2nd edition)*, Henri Cohen and Claire Lefebvre (eds.), pp549–566.

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- 2017 Abner, N. and R. Wilbur. [Quantification in American Sign Language](#). In *Handbook of Quantifiers in Natural Language, Volume 2*, Denis Paperno and Edard Keenan (eds.), pp. 21-59

Conference Proceedings

- 2018 Yu, S., C. Geraci, and N. Abner. [Sign Languages and the Online World: Online Dictionaries & Lexicostatistics](#). In *11th International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC 2018)*.
- 2018 Wilbur, R. B., N. Abner, S. Wood, and H. Koulidobrova. When BEAT is ‘exceed’: verbal comparison in American Sign Language. In *Proceedings of Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory*, 59–69.
- 2012 Abner, N. [The Object of My POSsession](#). *Proceedings of West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics 30*, 21–31.
- 2012 Graf, T. and N. Abner. [Is Syntactic Binding Rational?](#) *Proceedings of the 11th International Workshop on Tree Adjoining Grammars and Related Formalisms*.
- 2011 Abner, N. [WH-Words That Go Bump in the Right](#). *Proceedings of West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics 28*, 24–32.
- 2011 Abner, N. [Got Me A Plumb, Gonna Get Me A Scale](#). *Proceedings of Chicago Linguistics Society 47(1)*, 1–15.

Other Academic Publications and Manuscripts

- 2018 Miller, E. *, A. Salgat *, and N. Abner. Review of Nominal Modification in Italian Sign Language. *Folia Linguistica* 52(2), 543–548.
- 2014 Abner, N. There Once Was a Verb: The Predicative Core of Possessive and Nominalization Structures in American Sign Language (Dissertation Abstract). *Sign Language and Linguistics* 17:1, 109–118.
- 2013 Abner, N. Sign Language: An international handbook (Book Review). *Sign Language and Linguistics* 16:2, 271–277.
- 2012 Abner, N. Nominal Possession in American Sign Language. *Extended Abstracts from the 2012 Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting*.
- 2010 Abner, N. [For Game Settings, Press Select](#). *UCLA Working Papers in Linguistics*.
- 2009 Abner, N. and H. Burnett. On the So-Called “Determiners” of Tongan. Ms., UCLA.
- 2009 Abner, N. Phrasing and Prominence: Extracting Prosodic Information from the BU Radio Corpus. Ms., UCLA.
- 2008 Abner, N. and J. Bishop, eds. WCCFL 27: Proceedings of the 27th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics.

Peer-Reviewed Academic Presentations

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- 2019 Abner, N., Geraci, C., Mertz, J., Yu, S. Articulatory Evidence for Sign Language Typology and History. *Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research*, University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany.
 o Presented in ASL.
- 2019 Abner, N., Lakusta, L., Hussein, Y., Lotwisch, R., Miiller, E., Salgat, A. Asymmetries in Spatial Communication: Evidence from Sources and Goals. *Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research*, University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany.
- 2019 Geraci, C., Mertz, J., Lettieri, J., Yu, S., Abner, N. Typological and Historical relations across sign languages: The view from articulatory features. *Phonetics and Phonology in Europe (PaPE 2019)*, University of Salento, Lecca, Italy.
- 2019 Abner, N., R. Lotwisch, Y. Hussein, L. Lakusta. From Speech to Gesture: Where Do We See Source-Goal Asymmetries? *Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America*, New York, NY.
- 2019 Abner, N., Mertz, J., Lettieri, J., Yu, S., Geraci, C. Typological and Historical relations across sign languages: The view from articulatory features. *Generative Linguistics in the Old World (GLOW 2019)*, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway.
- 2018 Abner, N., R. Lotwisch, Y. Hussein, L. Lakusta. Source-Goal Asymmetries: Where do they come from and what parts of communication do they get to? *International Society for Gesture Studies*, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2018 Abner, N., C. Geraci, J. Lettieri, S. Yu. Articulatory Relationships Across Sign Languages. *International Society for Gesture Studies*, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2018 Abner, N., R. Lotwisch, Y. Hussein, L. Lakusta. Source-Goal Asymmetries: Where do they come from and what parts of communication do they get to? *International Society for Gesture Studies*, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2018 Yu, S., C. Geraci, N. Abner. Sign Languages and the Online World Online Dictionaries & Lexicostatistics. *11th Language Resources and Evaluation Conference*, Miyazaki, Japan.
- 2018 Abner, N., C. Geraci, J. Lettieri, S. Yu. Typological and Historical relations across sign languages: The view from articulatory features. *XIV AISV Conference*, Bozen-Bolzano, Italy.
- 2018 King, R. and N. Abner. Representation of Event Structure in the Manual Modality: Evidence for a Universal Mapping Bias. *Workshop on the Emergence of Universals*, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.
- 2018 King, R. and N. Abner. Event Structure Markings in Sign Language and Gesture. *2018 Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Society of America*, Salt Lake City, UT.
- 2017 King, R. and N. Abner. Iconic Representation of Event Structure in ASL and Gesture. *CLS-MPI Iconicity Focus Group Workshop*. Center for Language Studies (Radboud University) & Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, Netherlands.
- 2017 Abner, N., E. Koulidobrova, S. Wood, and R. B. Wilbur. Don't miss the BEAT!: Exceeds Comparatives in American Sign Language. *Chicago Linguistics Society*. University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

- 2017 Abner, N. and E. Koulidobrova. When BEAT is *exceed*: Verbal Comparison in American Sign Language. Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory. University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland.
- 2016 Abner, N., R. King, and M. Russoniello. Representation of Event Semantics in Predicate Signs and Gestures. Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory. University of Venice, Venice, Italy.
- 2016 Abner, N., S. Namboodiripad, E. Spaepen, and S. Goldin-Meadow. Child Hometowners Innovate Morphology: Evidence from Number Marking. Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research. La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.
- 2016 Abner, N., M. Flaherty, K. Stangl, D. Brentari, S. Goldin-Meadow. Distinguishing Objects and Actions in Hometown and Nicaraguan Sign Language: The Emergence of Lexical Categories. Posted presented at Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research. La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.
- 2015 Abner, N., M. Flaherty, K. Stangl, D. Brentari, S. Goldin-Meadow. Emergent Lexical Categories: Nouns and Verbs in Hometown and Nicaraguan Sign Language. Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory. Universitat Papeu Fabreu, Barcelona, Spain.
- 2015 Abner, N., K. Cooperrider, and S. Goldin-Meadow. Creating Meaning in the Palm of Your Hand. 2015 Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Society of America, Portland, OR.
- 2015 Abner, N., S. Namboodiripad, E. Spaepen, and S. Goldin-Meadow. Morphology in Child Hometown: Evidence from Number Marking. 2015 Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Society of America, Portland, OR.
- 2014 Abner, N. and K. Cooperrider. Pinning Down Palm-Ups. 6th Conference of the International Society for Gesture Studies. University of California, San Diego, CA.
- 2014 Two-By-Two: Ambiguity of Nominalizing Reduplication in American Sign Language. Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory. University of Venice, Venice, Italy.
- 2014 Abner, N., S. Namboodiripad, E. Spaepen, and S. Goldin-Meadow. What Counts: Morphological Encoding of Number Information in Child Hometowners. Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory. University of Venice, Venice, Italy.
- 2013 Abner, N. Classifying Reduplicated Nouns in ASL. Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research 11. University College London, London, England.
- 2013 Abner, N. Interpreting Possessives in ASL: Nominal and Verbal Factors. Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research 11. University College London, London, England.
- 2013 Abner, N. Deriving Meaning in the VP and DP: The Case of Possessives in American Sign Language. Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Society of America. Boston, MA.

- 2012 Graf, T. and N. Abner. Is Syntactic Binding Rational? TAG+11: The 11th International Workshop on Tree Adjoining Grammars and Related Formalisms. University Paris-Diderot, Paris, France.
- 2012 Abner, N. and T. Graf. Binding Complexity and the Status of Pronouns in English and ASL. Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory. University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland.
- 2012 Getting Together a POSSE: The Primacy of Predication in ASL Possessives. Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory. University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland.
- 2012 N. Abner and T. Graf. The Complexity of Binding in English and ASL. Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society. University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- 2012 Abner, N. The Object of My POSSESSION. West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics. University of California, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA.
- 2012 Abner, N. Nominal Possession. Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Society of America. Portland, OR.
- 2012 Daland, R. and N. Abner. Testing Prerequisites for Prosodic Bootstrapping. Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Society of America. Portland, OR.
- 2011 Abner, N. On Being and Becoming P and *Plumb* P. 47th Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society. University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- 2010 Abner, N. WH-Words That Go Bump On the Right. 28th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics. University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.
- 2010 Abner, N. Rightward WH-Movement as Clefting in American Sign Language. Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Society of America. Baltimore, MD.
- 2010 Abner, N. and H. Burnett. Tongan Un-Ds: On the So-Called Tongan “Determiners”. Workshop on Syntax and Semantics 7. University of Nantes, Nantes, France.
- 2010 Abner, N. Rightward WH-Movement as Clefting in American Sign Language. Annual Meeting of the Michigan Linguistics Society. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Invited Talks

- 2019 Handmade Events. Linguistics Department Colloquium, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
- 2018 Why do we love sign language so much for everyone but Deaf kids? Language-Matters Initiative, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
2018. Grammatical Categories in Established and Emergent Languages. Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI.
- 2018 The Emergence of Language in Deaf Communities. Friends of Linguistics, Linguistics Department, University of California, Los Angeles, CA.
- 2018 Sign Languages & The Rights of Deaf Children. Pre-Speech and Hearing Club, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

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- 2018 Critical Conversation = Encounters in Alterity, University of Michigan Initiative on Disability Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
 o Invited Discussant
- 2018 Typological and Historical Relations Across Sign Languages. Invited Talk, Linguistics Department, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA.
- 2018 Stalled! Non-Compliant Bodies. A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
 o Invited Panelist, “Radical Inclusion: Infrastructural Spaces by Design”
- 2017 Grammatical Categories in Established and Emergent Languages. Linguistics Colloquium, Graduate Center, CUNY, New York, NY.
- 2016 Language Emergence and the Gesture-(Sign) Language Continuum. Seminar in Meaning in Speech, Sign, and Gestures (Philippe Schlenker), NYU, New York, NY.
- 2016 Distinguished Categories: Structured Iconicity in Established and Emergent Sign Systems. LINGUAE Seminar in Linguistics. Institut Jean-Nicod, Département d’études cognitives, École normale supérieure, Paris, France
- 2016 American Sign Language: Patterns and Pressures of the Linguistic System. Seminar on the State of the Art of Sign Language Research. Institut Jean-Nicod, Département d’études cognitives, École normale supérieure, Paris, France
- 2016 Abner, N. Origins of Event Visibility. Purdue Workshop on Emerging Languages. Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.
- 2015 WH-Questions in American Sign Language: The Not-So-Odds and Ends. Department of Linguistics, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore PA.
- 2014 What You See Is What You Get-Get: Reduplicated Nominals in American Sign Language. Linguistics Syntax Supper, City University of New York, New York, NY.
- 2013 Nominalization in American Sign Language: Evidence for Structure Dependence in Reduplication. Linguistics Colloquium, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI.
- 2013 Predicative Origins of POSSESSIVE Constructions in American Sign Language. Presented at the Workshop on Language, Cognition, and Computation. University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- 2010 Questions at the Interface. Formal and Experimental Approaches to Sign Language in Paris. École normale supérieure, Paris, France.
- 2010 Intra-Language Variability: Syntax fail? Undergraduate Linguistics Club, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA.

Advising

University of Michigan

2019–present Faculty Advisor, Young Democratic Socialists of America

L’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris, France)

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2018 Mirko Santoro. *Compounds in sign languages: The case of Italian and French Sign Language*. Rapporteur, PhD Committee.

Linguistic Society of America

2019 Pop-Up Mentoring, Status of Women in Linguistics (COSWL).

Montclair State University - Program

2016–present Academic Advisor, Minor in American Sign Language.

2014–present Faculty Advisor, American Sign Language Club.

2014–present Academic Advisor, Undergraduate program in Linguistics.

Montclair State University - Research

2017 Rebecca Lotwisch. *The Source-Goal Phenomenon in Speech and Gesture*

2015 Gulnaz Gumerova. *The Acquisition of Russian Grammatical Gender*. Master's Research Project.

University of Chicago

2014 Jessica Goodman. *Development of the Palm-Up Gesture: The Influence of Child-Directed Speech*. Undergraduate Honors Thesis.

Teaching

University of Michigan

2019 Gesture, Sign, and Speech (Capstone)

2018, 2019 Introduction to Linguistic Analysis

2018 Introduction to Syntax

2018 Responsible Conduct of Research and Scholarship Training (Single Session)

2017, 2018 Deafness and Disability

2017 Sign Language Linguistics

Montclair State University

2016, 2017 Gesture, Sign, and Speech

2015, 2016, 2017 Semantics

2014, 2015, 2016 Language & Linguistics (Graduate Level)

2016 Syntax

2015, 2016 Introduction to General Linguistics

2014, 2015 Sign Language Linguistics

2014 Structure of American English

University of California, Los Angeles

2011, 2012 Structure & Culture of American Sign Language [Instructor]

2010, 2011 Syntax II [TA]

2010, 2011 Syntactic Theory II (Graduate Level) [Grader]

2011 Introduction to Linguistic Analysis [TA]

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- 2010 Introduction to the Study of Language [TA]
- 2010 Introduction to the Study of Language [Instructor]
- 2009 Semantics [TA]

Guest Lectures

- 2017 Sign Language Typology. Languages of the World, Montclair State University.
- 2016 Homesign and Emergent Sign Languages. Psycholinguistics, Montclair State University.
- 2014 Sign Language Linguistics. Introduction to Linguistics, Macalester College.
- 2014 Sign Language Variation and Change. Sociolinguistics, Macalester College.
- 2013 Possessives. Structure of American Sign Language, University of Chicago.
- 2012 Sign Language Syntax and Semantics. Introduction to Linguistics, University of Chicago.
- 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 Sign Language Linguistics. Introduction to the Study of Language, UCLA.
- 2011 Raising vs. Control. Syntactic Theory I (Graduate Level), UCLA.
- 2010, 2011 Language Acquisition: What About Sign? Language Development, UCLA.
- 2011 Verbal Structure in American Sign Language. Syntax II, UCLA.
- 2010 Phonology of Signed Languages. Phonology II, UCLA.
- 2009 Sign Language Linguistics. Language as a Window to the Mind, UCLA.

■ Outreach Activities

Public Writing

- 2017 [“Statement Condemning HR 620 and Supporting the Disability Integration Act”](#)
- 2016 [“Sources for Authentic Portrayal of Life with Disability”](#)
- 2015 [“Remembering Other Dreams: \(Sign\) Language Access & Empowerment”](#)

Events

- 2018 [Sean Forbes: Public Performance & Community Discussion](#)

■ Service

Reviewing

- Grants *National Science Foundation, National Science Centre (Poland)*
- Journals *Cognitive Science* (1 manuscript), *Glossa* (1 manuscript), *Sign Language and Linguistics* (3 manuscripts), *Language* (2 manuscripts), *Semantics and Pragmatics* (1 manuscript), *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* (1 manuscript), *Lingua* (3 manuscripts), *Journal of Semantics* (1 manuscript), *Cognitive Linguistics* (1 manuscript), *Child Development* (1 manuscript)

Conferences *Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research* (2019), *Generative Linguistics in the Old World* (2019), *Sinn und Bedeutung* (2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015), *West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics* (2018), *Chicago Linguistics Society* (2018), *Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory* (2018), *Evolution of Language* (2017, 2013), *Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America* (2018, 2017, 2016, 2014), *International Society for Gesture Studies* (2016), *Semantics and Linguistic Theory* (2015), *Incontro di Grammatica Generativa* (2012)

Edited *Three Streams of Generative Language Acquisition Research: Selected Papers from the 7th Meeting of Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition — North America*, University of Illinois at Urbana, *The Routledge Handbook of Theoretical and Experimental Sign Language Research*

University

University of Michigan

2018–2018 Executive Committee, Linguistics Department

2017–2018 Graduate Committee, Linguistics Department

Montclair State University

2017 Moderator, Student Research Symposium

2015–2016 Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Montclair State University.

2014–2015 Separately Budgeted Research & Distinguished Scholar Committee, Montclair State University.

UCLA

2012 Search Committee, UCLA ASL Program.

University of Michigan

2004–2005 Student Representative to the Undergraduate Committee, University of Michigan Linguistics.

Field

2017–2020 Program Committee, Linguistics Society of America.

Other, Academic

2016–present Coordinator, American Sign Language/US Partnership, www.spreadthesign.com.

2016 External PhD Reviewer, Brendan Costello. *Language and modality: Effects of the use of space in the agreement system of lengua de signos española (Spanish Sign Language)* University of Amsterdam & University of the Basque Country (Joint Degree).

2014 External PhD Reviewer, Lara Mantovan. *Nominal modification in Italian sign language (LIS)*. Ca'Foscari University of Venice.

2013 Sign Language Consultant. Fromkin, V., R. Rodman, and N. Hyams, eds. *Introduction to Language (10th Edition)*. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

2008, 2012 Open House Committee, UCLA Linguistics.

2011–2012 Volunteer ASL Instructor, UCLA Undergraduate American Sign Language Club.

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- 2008–2012 Graduate Student Desk Czar, UCLA Linguistics.
- 2007–2008 Planning Committee, 27th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics.

Other, Non-Academic

- 2012–present Board of Directors, [Camp Looking Glass](#). Greenville, MS.
 - o Camp Looking Glass is a not-for-profit organization in Greenville, MS, that provides free and accessible summer camp opportunities and year-round activities to individuals with disabilities. Our mission is to foster lifelong friendships between individuals with and without disabilities and to provide a space where all individuals are included and celebrated.
 - o Volunteer & Co-Director, 2006–*present*
- 2008–2012 Volunteer Tutor, School on Wheels. Los Angeles, CA.
- 2007–2011 Volunteer, The Cheshire Project. Los Angeles, CA.
- 2005–2007 Corps Member, Teach for America. Greenville, MS.

Membership

- Lifetime Membership Linguistic Society of America.
- 2009–present Sign Language Linguistics Society.
- 2017–present American Association for the Advancement of Science
- 2018–present International Society for Gesture Studies

Languages

- Natural English, American Sign Language, French, Spanish
- Fieldwork American Sign Language, Appalachian English, Idioma de Señas de Nicaragua, Langue des signes française, Nicaraguan Homesign, Tongan
- Formal L^AT_EX, Python, OCaml