

# WWU LINGUISTICS NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER QUARTERS 2008

ISSUE 10

## *A Word from the Director*

This will be my last report as Director of Linguistics. After some 16 years as director of the program and 38 years of service to the university, I have decided that it is time to move on to retirement to do those things which have had to take a back seat to academics. I've been fortunate to oversee the development of a regular major in linguistics at Western, and the phenomenal growth of the program into one of the truly significant undergraduate programs in the country. With over 100 majors enrolled I am pleased to turn what I think has become a very viable program over to younger and very capable hands. Dr. Shaw Gynan has been serving as acting director of the program this spring quarter and I am pleased to be able to report that he has just been elected as the new permanent Director of Linguistics. I believe that the program will continue to flourish and remain a hallmark for undergraduate programs in linguistics under his leadership. The program would never have become what it is without the help and very active participation of the linguistics faculty from across the campus that came together to form an interdisciplinary linguistics committee. These included Shaw Gynan, of course, as well as Anne Lobeck, Kristin Denham, Linda Kimball, Ed Vajda, Lina Zeine, Jim Hearne, Janet Xing, John Underwood and Dwan Shipley. They all worked very hard in planning and staffing what eventually became our undergraduate program. I also need to thank the many assistants we have had to the program over the years, and particularly the current assistant, Andrew Blick, who has done an absolutely phenomenal job in this capacity for the last two years. We are so lucky in having him continue in that role for a third year next year. We are also so very fortunate in having such strong student support and participation from the Linguistics Club headed by Marten van Schijndel. The club was officially recognized by the Associated Students as the top departmental club on campus. I also need to thank Samantha Wray, an assistant to the program that has spent literally hundreds of hours in processing data for a paper we are giving jointly for a colloquium on May 28. I believe that this is also the first faculty-student joint project presentation.

You will find in this newsletter, reports on all manner of activity throughout the quarter. We will be welcoming a new French linguist, Christina Keppie, and German linguist, Shannon Dubenion-Smith, in the fall. You will also read about various presentations both in student and faculty colloquia as well as those given in Scholar's week and the many events hosted by the linguistics club throughout the year.

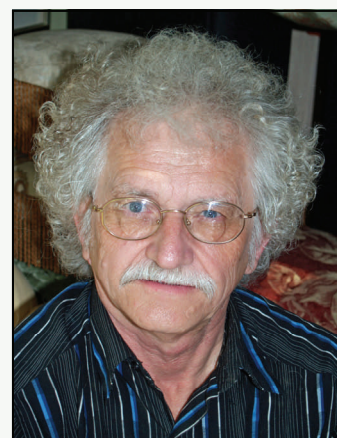
I have felt privileged in being director of the program for these many years. I know that I will share the pride of seeing the program developing and prospering under the new leadership over the years to the same degree that Vladimir Milicic, my predecessor, has relished our growth and success.

As always, we appreciate your continued support of our program without which we would be truly floundering. Please visit our web page occasionally. Marty, the student club president, will keep it in to shape throughout the year. We would also like to give our thanks to the Western Foundation (<http://www.foundation.wvu.edu/>) for their continued support in the publication costs of this newsletter.

Sincerely,



Rudi Weiss



DR. RUDI WEISS

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>A Word from the Director</i>	1
<i>WWULiE</i>	2
<i>Spring Faculty Colloquium</i>	2
<i>The Linguistics Club</i>	3
<i>Linguistics at Western</i>	3
<i>Staff &amp; Faculty Updates</i>	4
<i>Outstanding Graduate</i>	4
<i>The Spring Colloquium</i>	4

## *WWULiE Workshop*

June 25th and 26th, Anne Lobeck and Kristin Denham (WWU English Department and Linguistics Program faculty) proudly held the second annual Western Washington University Linguistics in Education (WWULiE) Workshop. The workshop attracted guests from various fields (K-12 teachers, literacy specialists, linguists, speech pathologists, students, etc.) from various areas of the country. The workshop proved to be a great success as the attendees worked through linguistics problem sets, listened to presentations on linguistics in education, and participated in group discussion and analysis of various aspects of the field.

The two-day workshop began with an overview of what Dr. Denham and Dr. Lobeck and their LiE students have been up to this past year. WWU linguistics student Scott Grinnell presented his teaching in Schome High School (in collaboration with teacher Dana Smith, who was unable to attend the workshop). Dr. Denham and Dr. Lobeck introduced their TeachLing website ([www.teachling.wvu.edu](http://www.teachling.wvu.edu)), David Simmons, a French teacher from Seattle presented some of his work on language study, and Beth Keyser, a high school teacher from Montana offered some ideas on using technology to teach linguistics were presented. The second day of the workshop began

with discussion of practical applications of linguistics into the K-12 curriculum and state standards by Dr. Denham, Dr. Lobeck, Seattle teacher David Pippin, and linguists Maya Honda (Wheelock College) and Wayne O'Neil (MIT) on integrating linguistics into the English language-learning classroom. Finally, all attendees worked through lesson plans and ideas presented on the TeachLing website. Denham and Lobeck hope to host the third WWULiE next year, and to continue to collaborate with colleagues in elementary and secondary schools with the goal of improving teaching about language in innovative ways.



**THE TEACHLING WEBSITE,  
MAINTAINED BY DR. LOBECK  
AND DR. DENHAM**

*“The results of the study also supports the notion that once language acquisition reaches a certain stage, intra-language factors in L2 take on a significant role in guiding/ changing perception.”*

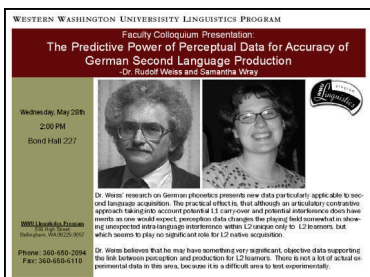
## *Spring Faculty Colloquium Presentation*

As one of his final contributions as director of the Linguistics Program, Dr. Rudi Weiss presented a paper for the Faculty Linguistics Colloquium held on May 27. The paper was co-presented by Samantha Wray, a graduating senior in linguistics who processed the majority of the data for the presentation. This actually marks the first time in the history of the linguistics program that we have had a faculty colloquium presentation co-authored by a student.

The title of the presentation was “Perceptual parameter alteration in second language acquisition as a consequence of goal directed phonetic training: a case of German vowels” This study concludes many years of perception testing using the same instrument as a pre- and post-test for students enrolled in German phonetics classes since 1980. The data of nearly 200 students comprised the basis of this study, the results of which provide clear evidence for the shifting of perceptual parameters in L2 acquisition. The results also shows the possibility of using pedagogical techniques based on perception that bring students within a ten week period to a significantly more native-like level in perception – the equivalent perhaps of a year or

more of additional non-traditional exposure and class work in language study. This study is also one of the few based on hard experimental evidence to reinforce the existence of a clear link between perception and expected difficulty in production in L2 acquisition. Independent of remarkable improvement in perception scores, the vowels which are difficult to produce from a contrastive articulatory perspective also rank as the most difficult to classify correctly through perception. Additionally, the results of the study also supports the notion that once language acquisition reaches a certain stage, intra-language factors in L2 take on a significant role in guiding/ changing perception.

Increasing precision and awareness of new lip-rounding inherent in German front vowel production as a systematic requirement, subsequently also leads to increased intra-language confusion in evaluating the perceptual factor of lip-rounding associated with all lip-rounded vowels including the lip-rounded back vowels shared in both languages. It is expected that this study will serve as a significant contribution to the area of psycholinguistics and will be revised for subsequent publication.



**FLYER FOR FACULTY COLLOQUIUM PRESENTATION**

## The Linguistics Club Update

This year the WWU Linguistics Club was a huge success. The club held numerous events, including crash courses in languages, seminars on various topics in linguistic inquiry, and even an end of the year picnic!

A sampling of the events presented since Winter quarter 2008 include, "RetroLinguistics," an overview of the history of linguistic technology presented by Dr. Rudi Weiss; "A Crash Course in Hungarian," which introduced students to the basic conversational Hungarian, presented by Dr. Arpad Benyi;

"Guarani Linguistics," which introduced the linguistic structure of this language of Paraguay, presented by Dr. Shaw Gynan and Sr. Ernesto Lopez; and "Chinese Calligraphy," in which Prof. Ho-Chin Yang presented the art of calligraphy, and even let student attempt to create their own piece of art!

This spring quarter the Linguistics Club held elections. The 2007-2008 officers, Co-Presidents Marten Van Schijndel and Rod Powell and Treasurer Samantha Wray did an excellent job of making the club prosper

during this academic year. During the 2008-2009 academic year, Marten Van Schijndel will continue as president, Rod Powell will be the vice-president, and Darcy Messer will be taking the position of treasurer.

The Linguistics Club officers are already looking for events and potential presentations that will resume next fall. Check out the Club website, <http://linguistics.wwu.edu/club/> for a list of upcoming events!

## Linguistics at Western: A Short History

-Dr. Rudi Weiss

In the early 60's when I was an undergraduate student at Western (then named Western Washington State College of Education) there was no linguistics offered on campus. In fact, I was not even aware of the field at that time. Western certainly was not unusual in that respect, since the field was almost entirely contained in select graduate schools. After I received my PhD in Germanic linguistics and came back to teach at Western in 1970 there was basically only a scattering of introductory courses offered on campus. Although there was a linguistics program directed by Dr. Peters of the English department, offerings were few and an academic track in that program did not exist. In the late 1970's Professor Milicic took over the program and we saw a gradual increase in the offerings. A minor in linguistics became a possibility and introductory courses were offered on a regular basis. Only individually created and approved student-designed majors were made possible into which linguistics

offerings such as were made available were infused. Professor Milicic created unique offerings such as Semiotics and created the foundation of what would later lead to a full-fledged program. Professor Milicic set up a very active faculty colloquium program which brought together faculty from all over campus. He also edited numerous interdisciplinary collections of contributions by faculty members on a variety of interesting contemporary topics.

I took over the program as director in 1991 and set about with the help of many colleagues across campus to design a genuine interdisciplinary major in linguistics. The major was approved as a pre-approved student-designed major; it was listed as such in the college catalog and had a set core curriculum with concentration options in five different departments. The enrollment into the program grew at a phenomenal rate, from the previous one or two student-designed majors a year to several dozens only a

few years later. We offered large GUR classes in introductory linguistics and sociolinguistics and made linguistics available to over 1,500 students every year. At the turn of the millennium, we petitioned for a regular college and state-approved major. The program grew even more as did our offerings. We now offer over twenty sections of linguistics courses each year and our major count has averaged over one hundred in each of the last four years. Students from all over the country have sought out our program and we are now indeed one of the significant undergraduate programs in the country. We already have many successful alumni who are currently engaged in active careers in linguistics. In fact, two of our former students who have completed their PhD's will be teaching in our program next year. Linguistics has indeed come a long way at Western in a relatively short period of time and will continue to prosper under the new leadership of Dr. Gynan.

WWU Linguistics Club  
Date: Mon, May 5  
Place: Humanities 242  
Time: 4:00pm

Presents:  
**RetroLinguistics**

We're on Facebook and at  
[www.wwu.edu/linguistics/](http://www.wwu.edu/linguistics/)

Dr. Rudi Weiss will be presenting a comparative view of the technology and methods used by linguists in the mid-1960s to those of today. This will include a demonstration of some of the old technology still floating about the halls of Western.

This is a call to all applied linguists to see how real linguists analyze spectrograms. Come meet with students and professors who share your interests!

For disability accommodations please call Marten van Schijndel at 360-636-7314.

Next Time:  
• Hungarian Crash Course  
• Dr. Arpad Benyi presents an introductory crash course in Hungarian language and culture.  
• Wed. May 14 at 3:00pm

514 High Street  
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THIS IS WHAT THE AS IS

FLYER FOR "RETROLINGUISTICS" PRESENTATION

*"Two of our former students who have completed their PhD's will be teaching in our program next year."*



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## Staff and Faculty Updates

This year the linguistics program has had its first ever student become professor. Dr. Jordan Brewer taught various courses for the Linguistics program and the English department, including introductory linguistics, phonetics, and phonology. On Monday, June 16th at 4:37 AM, Jordan and her husband, Jed, welcomed their new daughter, Kinsey Lorelei Brewer into the world (see photo on right). We congratulate Jordan on a successful first year at Western and on her new baby (a great future linguist!).



### Linguistics Alumni!

If you have a story that you would like to share please submit it via e-mail (linguistics@wwu.edu). If you are interested in becoming a member of the WWU Alumni Association, contact the Alumni Office at: (800)676-6885, or on the web at: <http://alumni.wwu.edu/>

## Outstanding Graduate for 2007-2008

The student selected to be the outstanding graduate for the 2007-2008 academic year was Megan Walker. Megan received a unanimous faculty nomination for her contributions to the Linguistics program and her dedication to her studies. Aside from being an outstanding Linguist, Megan also was in the university honors program, received a minor in Political Science, and studied ASL. Congratulations Megan, and best wishes for the future!

## The Spring Colloquium

This spring the Linguistics Program held its 2008-quarterly colloquium. Due to the large number of presentations, the group was divided into two concurrent sessions (and one mini-colloquium). Below is a list of the students, their presentation topic and their mentors for the project.

- Bradford, Lena: "Language Acquisition in Feral Children" (Prof. Dwan Shipley)  
Green, M. Brian: "Uzbek Morphology" (Dr. Shaw Gynan)  
Hogl, Cassandra: "Linguistics in the Schools" (Dr. Kristin Denham)  
Kehrli, Rachel: "The "Wanna" Contraction" (Dr. Kristin Denham)  
Lewis, Kaylee. & Alyssa Thornley: "Introduction to Forensic Linguistics and it's Practical Applications" (Dr. Shaw Gynan (Dr. Ngom))  
Myhre, Erica: "A Phonological Analysis of Lamba" (Dr. Jordan Brewer)  
Olson, Alexander: "Second Language Acquisition: German Influence on English" (Dr. Kendra Douglas)  
Simon, Morgan: "The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis Revisited" (Dr. Shaw Gynan)  
Wiener, Kevin: "Japanese Morphology of Verbs" (Dr. Shaw Gynan)  
Wray, Samantha: "Cross-Dialectal Analysis of Arabic Dualism" (Dr. Kristin Denham)  
Yount, Thomas: "Culture as a System of Mediation and Communication" (Dr. Shaw Gynan)

The Western Washington University Linguistics Program Presents:  
**The Spring 2008 Linguistics Program Colloquium**

**Note to Linguistics Students:**  
The colloquium presentation is mandatory for all majors. If you plan to present, be sure to contact the professor for whom you completed the prospective project. Then, complete a colloquium presentation form available outside of Humanities 245 and online, and schedule a conference with either Dr. Kristin Denham or Dr. Kendra Douglas (information on right).

All forms for the colloquium are due on May 30th!

**LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS**

What's interesting?  
你怎么样?  
¿Qué pasa?  
Kiss: kiss?

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**Wednesday, June 4th  
2:00 PM-4:00 PM  
SMATE 150 &  
Comm. (C2) 105**

THE SPRING COLLOQUIUM FLYER