

Distinctive Features

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY Department of Linguistics and Oriental Languages

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Upcoming Events

Mary Richardson, a current graduate student, will present "Analysis of Word Class Categories by Spontaneous Language Sample and Parent Report at 20 Months" at the 2002 joint meeting of the Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders (SRCLD) and the International Congress for the Study of Child Language (IASCL) to be held in Madison, Wisconsin.

Message from the Department Chair

We hope you enjoy this fourth issue of *Distinctive Features*. In this issue, we would like to tell you about several important changes in our department.

In August 2001, Diane Novitsky, our wonderful long-time administrative coordinator, retired in order to spend more time with her family. She is a proud grandmother! As all of you know, Diane was an extraordinary resource for us all. We were all very sorry to see her go. April Counts has taken over Diane's job, and we are happy to have her with us. Welcome, April!

This year, we have conducted three searches for permanent, tenure-track positions, one each in computational linguistics, applied linguistics, and Arabic. We are happy to announce that all three searches have been successful, and we are excited about the new faculty who will be joining us this coming fall. Dr. Rob Malouf (Ph.D. Stanford), a specialist in machine learning, will be an important member of our computational linguistics program. Dr. Eniko Csomay (Ph.D. Northern Arizona), a corpus specialist, will teach mainly applied linguistics courses. And Dr. Ghada Osman will teach Arabic language as well as play an important role in a new Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies administered by the College of Arts and Letters. We are delighted that these dynamic new faculty members will be joining us.

Last December, Dr. Catherine Yiyu Woo, who has served our university for the last 32 years, and who founded our Chinese language program in 1968, retired. Her contributions to the university and the department will always be remembered. Dr. Woo has not left SDSU entirely: she is still working with the Language Acquisition Resource Center (LARC).

For Dr. Ann Johns, this spring is the last semester that she will be teaching as a full-time professor; she is officially retiring this year. But fortunately for us, she will come back to the campus to teach in the fall semester for the next five years.

We have had an active colloquium series thanks to the hard work of the LSA (Linguistics Students Association). In fall 2001, Professor John Rickford's colloquium on African-American Vernacular English ("Ebonics") was a great success. Dr. Rickford, one of the nation's most notable and influential experts on Ebonics, gave a fascinating talk to an enthusiastic (and overflow) audience comprising not only linguists but also students and faculty from many disciplines as well as many community members.

We just had a successful spring '02 colloquium as well, highlighted by the featured presentation by Dr. Betty Birner of Northern Illinois University. Dr. Birner talked about her current research on discourse coherence; in



Linguistics department faculty and staff gathered to honor Dr. Woo at her surprise retirement party.

particular, how noncanonical constructions preserve coherence and facilitate processing. As you know, the spring colloquium is a one-day event in which a number of graduate students present their findings of completed or ongoing research projects. It was great to see our students working on diverse topics and getting interesting results.

We would like to thank the LSA also for organizing the Brown Bag series where several faculty members were invited to discuss possible research topics for student theses. We thank Laura Greenig, LSA President, for her hard work in making all of these events successful.

Last but not least, our new specialization in Computational Linguistics will officially start in fall 2002. Several of our students have already launched active research projects in this field under the direction of Dr. Gawron. Please visit our department web site for updates on our new programs and LSA activities.

The success of our programs and activities is due in part to the generous contributions that many of you have made in the past. These donations to our department (which are maintained by the SDSU Foundation and are fully tax-deductible) are used to support a wide variety of activities, such as hosting the annual colloquium, bringing in distinguished speakers, and supporting student research. Your support is very much appreciated.

We hope that you enjoy this issue and that you will keep us informed of your activities and interests as well. Please take a moment to fill out the insert in the middle of the newsletter and send it to us. This is the only way we can keep up with your activities after you have left SDSU.

Have a great rest of the year!

Soonja Choi *Jeff Kaplan*

Soonja Choi, Chair

Jeff Kaplan, Associate Chair

Four SDSU alumni will begin Ph.D. programs in Fall 2002

Jeanette Pettibone, who is working toward an M.A. in computational linguistics, will continue her studies while pursuing a Ph.D. at Stanford University.

Shin Fukuda, our 2002 outstanding graduating student, will receive his B.A. in Linguistics this May, and has been accepted at UCSD's Ph.D. program.

Paula Miller (M.A. 2001), will also begin work at UCSD this fall, in the Ph.D. program in Communication.

Patty Turner (M.A. 1998), a lecturer at SDSU, will begin work toward a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics at UCLA.



Welcome April!

The Linguistics Department welcomes April Counts as our new Administrative Coordinator. April, who comes to us from the Arts & Letters Dean's Office, began working in our department when Diane retired last August, and already she fits right in. "I love working in this department. It is by far the most diverse I've experienced on campus, and everyone has made me feel very welcomed." If you haven't met April yet, stop by and say hello!

Spring Colloquium

On Saturday, April 20th, the Linguistics Student Association hosted the 25th annual Spring Colloquium. LSA president Laura Greenig organized an informative day beginning with coffee and pastries. Students, presenters, faculty, and staff from area colleges got acquainted over breakfast, eager for the day's events to begin.

This year's featured speaker was Dr. Betty Birner of Northern Illinois University, who spoke on "Coherence and Inference in Noncanonical Syntax." Dr. Birner, an assistant professor in NIU's English department, focuses her research on discourse, pragmatics, functions of syntactic constructions, reference, semantics/pragmatics interface, and cognitive science. Her presentation summarized her current research on inferential relations in discourse and modality. This study focuses on how speakers and hearers use their syntactic options to create and preserve coherence in a discourse, and the part that inferences play in this process.

After discussing old/new information and the syntactic structure of discourse, Dr. Birner summarized Ellen Prince's theory, showing that discourse information can fall into one of three categories: hearer-old / discourse-old (evoked), hearer-old / discourse-new (unused), hearer-new / discourse-new (brand-new)—but not hearer-new / discourse-old. Dr. Birner then proposed a revision of Prince's paradigm, showing that inferables fit that previously empty fourth category. Dr. Birner plans to continue this research and further develop her theories on inferables.

The program included two graduate students presenting their research. Cheryl Livingston discussed her thesis work in "Linguistic and Interactional Features of Moderated Internet Chats." She showed samples of moderated chat interactions, and compared the linguistic aspects of moderated chats to other forms of communication, and concluded that moderated chats fall somewhere between spoken and written language in involvement features.



L-R: Alumni Carol Lowther, Virginia Guleff, and Barbara Laird-Jackson presented Dr. Johns with flowers and gifts after her "valedictory talk."



L-R: Dr. Ann Johns, Julie Williams, Shigeko Sekine, Dr. Betty Birner, Cheryl Livingston, and Dr. Jessica Barlow presented their research findings.

SDSU Alumni Shigeko Sekine (M.A. 1993, and Ph.D. student in Linguistics at UCLA) presented her thesis findings in "The Effects of Phonological and Lexical Factors on the L2 Speech Perception by Japanese Speakers." Previous theories have predicted that Japanese speakers are incapable of perceiving the /r-l/ contrast (among others). However, past studies have not focused on the possible interaction of phonological aspects and word frequency in L2 speech perception. She hypothesizes that high frequency words are perceived better than low frequency words. Her research suggests that word frequency rather than the particular phoneme or phoneme position is a better predictor of L2 perception.

Faculty presenters at the colloquium included Dr. Jessica Barlow from SDSU's department of Communicative Disorders. Dr. Barlow discussed "The Stop/Spirant Alternation in Spanish: Converging Evidence for a Fortition Account." Her research challenges the traditional account of the stop/spirant alternation, which predicts that in Spanish, /b,d,g/ are base forms, and spirantization produces /β,δ,ɣ/. Dr. Barlow hypothesizes the spirants as underlying forms, considering the way children, as well as L2 learners of Spanish and English, interpret the alternation.

Alumna Julie Williams (M.A., 2001), a lecturer in SDSU's Rhetoric and Writing Department, presented her thesis findings in her talk, "Biology Students in the First College Semester: Evaluation of Values, Literacies, and Learning Strategies." Her research showed that first-year-biology students at a four year university begin to acquire language used in scientific communities. This language acquisition is supported by text models, such as student textbooks.

Dr. Ann Johns capped off the day with her presentation "Professional Coherence: An Issue for Applied Linguists?" Dr. Johns is committed to the integration of theory, research, and classroom practices, and is especially interested in teaching ESL writing and reading. Dr. Johns' "valedictory talk" ended the colloquium on a high note when three of her former students presented her with flowers and gifts (see page 3).

All in all, this year's Colloquium was a huge success. Thank you, LSA president Laura Greenig and the LSA officers!

~Pamela Buggie

Retiring Faculty and Staff

Dr. Cathy Yi-Yu Woo honored for more than 30 years of service

After teaching at SDSU for more than 30 years, Dr. Woo retired in December 2001. To honor her commitment and accomplishments, the Linguistics department organized a surprise retirement party to express our appreciation for Dr. Woo's work.

The party took place on December 13th at Jasmine Seafood Restaurant in Claremont Mesa. Nearly all the department faculty attended the three-hour event, which began around 6:30 p.m. Dr. Zhang devised a brilliant plan for inviting unsuspecting Dr. Woo and her husband to the restaurant, presumably to have a casual dinner with Dr. Zhang's family, and Dr. Woo was quite surprised and happy when she saw her colleagues at the restaurant. Everyone cheerfully greeted her and expressed their thankfulness to Dr. Woo for her friendship and dedication to excellence in teaching over the years.

Dr. Choi presented Dr. Woo with an award to express the department's appreciation for all her contributions to the University and to the Chinese program. After Dr. Choi's introduction, Dr. Woo emotionally addressed the guests: "I was afraid I'd be so lost and so unhappy here. I found that I was loved for the past so many years. You were all so kind to me." She thanked Andrea Chu, a

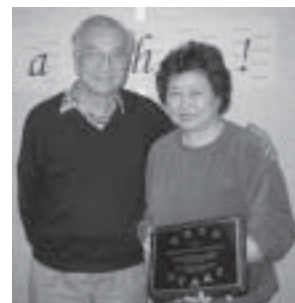
Chinese lecturer in our department, for team teaching with her for 20 years and expressed her gratitude and appreciation for outstanding work, commitment, and support. She also thanked Dr. Zhang, Dr. Wu, and Dr. Choi for organizing the party.

During the dinner, several faculty members (and spouses), including Dr. Donahue, Dr. Webb, Dr. Zhang, Dr. Mary Ann Lyman-Hager, and Shoshana Barlev gave a brief speech to thank Dr. Woo. All the participants enjoyed the event, and commented about the time they spent together working in the Linguistics department, as well as their relationship with Dr. Woo over the years.

When asked about her future plans, Dr. Woo told us that she intends to continue her work with the Language Acquisition Research Center (LARC) at SDSU, and she is also taking piano lessons. "I will paint more, write more, and play with my grandchildren more," she said.

Attending Dr. Woo's retirement party was a memorable experience for me. I am glad I had the opportunity and the pleasure of being part of this moment and celebrating Dr. Woo's career at SDSU.

~ChiPing Chang



Dr. Woo (with her husband) accepted an award for service at her surprise retirement party; she will continue her work with LARC.

Dr. Ann Johns is retiring... sort of

If one definition of success is to be the best at what you love to do, then Dr. Johns lives that definition. She has been recognized by her colleagues throughout the world for her work in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), genre analysis, and pedagogy . . . and, locally, for her teaching and contributions to the campus. This year, she's retiring, but she will continue to teach during the fall semester for up to five years.

Dr. Johns joined SDSU in 1978 as an ESL writing teacher and Director of the American Language Institute. In 1978, when the Linguistics Department needed someone to teach *550: Theory and Practice of ESL*, she became a lecturer in our department. In 1984, she was offered a tenure-track, joint appointment in Academic Skills (now DRWS) and Linguistics, and she was promoted to full professor in 1986. Since that time, she has received numerous campus awards for her teaching and service (e.g., "Outstanding Faculty," "Top 25 at SDSU" in 2001), particularly for her work in co-founding the Freshman Success Program and for initiating the SDSU Center for Teaching and Learning. She has published more than 40 refereed articles and book chapters, written one single-authored volume (*Text, Role, and Context: Developing Academic Literacies*, Cambridge, 1997), and edited two other volumes.

Despite all of this, Dr. Johns feels that, first and foremost, she is an ESL and writing teacher. She speaks of her students with excitement, concern, and compassion. Any linguistics student lucky enough to have taken a course from Dr. Johns knows the vivacity, intelligence, background, and warmth she brings to the classroom. Her colorful

character, her personal tales of exotic cultural experiences, and the obvious love she has for her work contribute to an exciting and unforgettable learning experience.

And, to a student in the applied linguistics M.A. program here at SDSU, the learning experience is invaluable. Professor Johns provides her graduate students with a strong theoretical foundation in language acquisition and second language literacy necessary to create and implement successful ESL reading and writing classroom practices. Upon completing one of her courses, Dr. Johns' students leave with crucial insight into the complex and diverse ESL population that they will soon be (or already are) addressing. Included with that insight is an ability to address a variety of those students' educational needs. With a strong emphasis on the complexities of expository reading and writing, Dr. Johns' courses are critical to anyone planning to teach ESL in an academic environment, but her pedagogical expertise also lends itself to a variety of ESL goals.

Part of Dr. Johns' expertise is designing language curricula for populations other than academic. Students who take her course in ESP are introduced to a variety of English language needs encountered by a population much more diversified than that found on a college campus. And in this course, she gives the students the skills necessary for assessing and addressing these diverse English language needs. Even in partial retirement, these are tough shoes to fill.

So now what? In addition to teaching one course a year for the department and continuing a similar working

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Even though she is retiring this year, Dr. Johns will continue to teach classes each fall for the next five years.

Ongoing Faculty Research

Dr. Soonja Choi receives NSF Grant for cross-linguistic study

The Child Language Lab on Alvarado Road is slowly taking form. Dr. Choi and her R.A.s—Laura Greenig and Jung Ihn—spent several months in the Fall of 2001 setting up the lab, which includes an equipment and testing room, assistant offices, main project office, and a colorful children's waiting room. It is here that Dr. Choi conducts most of her work nowadays. The opening of the new language acquisition testing facility constitutes part of a two-year grant allocated to Dr. Choi by the National Science Foundation (NSF). All the technical devices used in previous studies will soon be replaced by digital technology including iMovies and QuickTime Player. The new equipment means more training for staff, but the equipment will become portable—which is vital, because part of the data necessary to the project will be collected in Korea.

This February marked the 30th anniversary of Dr. Choi's involvement in language acquisition. After completing both her B.A. and M.A. in French in her native Korea, Dr. Choi taught French to Korean high school students. She then traveled to France to obtain her *maitrise* degree (similar to a Masters) in Applied Linguistics at the University of Paris IV (La Nouvelle Sorbonne Quatre), where she became exposed to ideas of Chomsky as well as current ideas in the area of psycholinguistics. Dr. Choi continued her career at the University of Buffalo and focused her doctoral work on first language acquisition; her dissertation topic examined the development of negation in English, French, and Korean. She received a dissertation grant from NSF to conduct parts of her research in France. NSF awarded consecutive grants to Dr. Choi from 1992 to 1997 to study the development of language-specific spatial semantics in children learning English, Dutch, and Korean. During that period, she worked with Melissa Bowerman of Max Plank Institute in the Netherlands, developmental psychologist Jean Mandler of UCSD, and Lorraine McDonough, who is now at the CUNY Graduate Center & Brooklyn College.

The acquisition of language-specific spatial semantics is also the focus of Dr. Choi's current research, which is a cross-linguistic study investigating the onset time of language-specific categorizations made by English and Korean children. In adult grammar, while English speakers categorize spatial relations based on support (*on*) and containment (*in*), there is no such grammatical distinction in Korean. Instead, Korean speakers make a distinction between tight fit (*kkita*), and loose fit (*nehta/nohta*) (see Figures 1 and 2). This distinction is made using verbs, and the distinction cross-cuts the English categories of support and containment. As an example of tight and loose fit, a ring on a finger would be Korean tight fit (*kkita*), whereas a pencil on a table would be expressed as loose fit (*nehta/nohta*)—even though both of these are expressed by *on* in English. Conversely, a cassette *in* a tape player and a ring *on* a finger in English would both be expressed by tight fit (*kkita*) in Korean.

Dr. Choi and her colleagues have found that sensitivity to language-specific semantic categories begins



Laura Greenig (L) and Jung Ihn (R) assist Dr. Choi (center) in her child language research.

as early as 17 months of age in young children. Data from 17-month-old children show that they develop clear understanding of the category distinctions salient to their languages. Contrary to the traditional Piagetian view that early semantic categories are mapped onto universal nonlinguistic cognition, the results of Dr. Choi's study indicate that children acquire their language-specific spatial semantic distinctions very rapidly, beginning in the comprehension stage that precedes actual language production. This finding became a fundamental groundwork for Dr. Choi's future projects.

The current project is an extension of many years of research and it aims to evaluate the prelinguistic categorization patterns of children. The main question that preoccupies Dr. Choi is "What are the mechanisms that facilitate children's readiness to categorize in a language-specific way, and how does language influence nonlinguistic processing in the minds of adult speakers?" Having confirmed that there is but a short period during which children are ready to attend to language-specific categories, and realizing that cognitive concepts must initially be language-universal, Dr. Choi is examining younger children, at the preverbal stage of development (from 9 to 14 months of age) to study possible preverbal patterns of categorization.

One possible hypothesis is that infants are sensitive to a variety of small categories regardless of cultural variation. For example, they might develop concepts such as support, containment, loose fit, tight fit, or attachment. Having at their disposal a myriad of categories, the children are then ready to tune out the distinctions absent in their language, and attend to the salient ones very rapidly. Thus, even though English children may be sensitive to loose/tight fit distinction at the pre-linguistic stage, they lose that sensitivity as they acquire the semantics of their language.

Preliminary data collected by Dr. Choi so far show that this may be the case. Furthermore, her data on adult speakers show that whereas Korean speakers continue to show their nonlinguistic sensitivity to the distinction between tight and loose fit, English speakers do not.



Figure 1: Tight Fit. These clamps are "on" the rod (Korean tight fit, or *kkita*).



Figure 2: Loose Fit. These clamps are "on" the block (Korean loose fit, or *neta/nohta*).

The premise of this postulation can be paralleled with phonemic studies of /l/ and /r/ in English and Japanese. In English /l/ and /r/ are two distinct phonemes, while in Japanese they are allophones of the same phoneme. It has been observed that Japanese children at the prelinguistic stage are sensitive to the phonetic variation, but that sensitivity disappears as soon as the production occurs.

When asked whether her research will validate Whorfian beliefs, Dr. Choi said that her attempts were not to confirm Whorf, but to revive a modified version of his theory. Indeed, the relationship between language and

thought is such that language influences cognition, but it is still a matter of degree as adult speakers that did lose their ability to perceive semantic relations absent in their mother tongue are still capable of reevaluating and learning them through foreign languages.

While for now we can only speculate on mechanisms conditioning readiness for language-specific categories by children, Dr. Choi and her staff are ready to welcome the “little ones.” They might not be speaking yet, but they do have so much to teach us.

~Magdalena McMillan

Dr. Mark Gawron developing Japanese-English translator

Every Wednesday, three native Japanese-speakers gather with Dr. Gawron in his office to contemplate the difference between English and Japanese semantics. The discussion usually lasts for two hours; sometimes more. This work originated as a summer 2001 project, when four linguistics students—Satoshi Enoue, Rie Ozawa, John Fitzpatrick, and I—were recruited by Dr. Gawron as research assistants to collect Japanese articles, translate them, and develop comparative analyses of Japanese and English verbs. John is now back in Japan, but Satoshi, Rie, and I have continued in the project.

Our first task was to develop Japanese frame semantics. Frame semantics is an approach to describing the meaning of words and grammatical constructions, based on the assumption that native speakers have knowledge of the conceptual structure or semantic frames of words, and that these frames provide the background for the words’ existence in the language and their use in discourse. For example, the concept of “float” is not the same in Japanese and English. In English, float can denote at least two situations: (1) an item stays on the surface of a liquid (*Does this kind of wood float?*), and (2) an item moves as on moving liquid or air (*The logs floated down the river.*). However, Japanese float does not denote the second situation; float can never be used in Japanese to say that something “floats down.” So, we would say that float is conceptualized and grammaticized differently in the two languages; or that English float and Japanese float have different “frames.” This approach was developed by Dr. Fillmore of UC Berkeley, who was Dr. Gawron’s Ph.D. advisor. At that time, the two of them began the task of determining how different events and states are conceptualized in the two languages.

In 1999, when Dr. Gawron was a researcher at SRI International, he received a grant with his fellow researcher, Japanese computational linguist Megumi Kameyama, to develop a machine translation system for translating between Japanese and English. Unfortunately, this project took an unexpected turn with the untimely death of Dr. Kameyama. After a brief hiatus, Dr. Gawron continued the research with another Japanese linguist, but shortly thereafter he moved to SDSU to establish our Computational Linguistics specialization.

In Fall 2000, when Dr. Gawron first taught *Introduction to Computational Linguistics* at SDSU, he met Satoshi,

an aspiring computational linguist. Satoshi was a perfect fit for Dr. Gawron, who, in order to resume his research, had been looking for a native Japanese speaker who was interested in computational linguistics.

In fact, Satoshi has been the driving force of the project. Besides collecting Japanese articles and translating them, he has been searching for and collecting various different natural language processing tools and Japanese corpora under Dr. Gawron’s guidance, as well as developing morphological analyses and frame semantics analyses of Japanese. Satoshi is interested in learning how concepts and skills developed in computational linguistics can be used in research and development in natural language processing. His eventual goal is to create a parser based on Japanese frame semantics—and this looks like a promising candidate for his future M.A. thesis.

Rie learned of the project through Satoshi, and she jumped at the opportunity to formally study Japanese. The work has made her realize that she actually knew very little about the language she speaks natively. Rie appreciates the way Dr. Gawron conducts this research. According to Rie, he “always brings himself down to the level of the students, and learns with and from his students.” She also confesses that joining the program has completely changed the direction that her thesis is headed and, possibly, the direction that she herself is headed as a linguist. It convinced her to continue researching Japanese.

I joined the project for reasons similar to Rie’s, and I have been amazed to find so many interesting phenomena in Japanese. I have learned a lot not only about Japanese but also English through group discussions, and I intend to gain more insight from Dr. Gawron’s tremendous amount of linguistics knowledge.

Despite his hectic schedule between teaching classes and developing the new specialization, Dr. Gawron has managed to spend time with us weekly and the project is about to produce some tangible results. He recently hired a Japanese computer science major, Hiroko Baba. With this new addition, Dr. Gawron aims to propel the project to the next level and is about to get closer to the ultimate goal: the creation of a high-quality Japanese-English translation system.

~Shin Fukuda

Hiroshi Shimizu (M.A. 2000), is currently a researcher at Foreign Language Research Institute in Japan.

Paul Justice (M.A. 1997) currently teaches Linguistics 101, 420, and 430 at SDSU, and also teaches English 118 (similar to our Linguistics 101) at Grossmont College. Paul recently published his first book: *Relevant Linguistics: An Introduction to the Structure and Use of English for Teachers*, Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications (2002).

Yuko (Kanai) Dionne (M.A. 1996) has taught Japanese language at SDSU, Grossmont College, Mesa College, MiraCosta College, USIU, and Helix High School. Yuko has a single subject teaching credential in Japanese. She is currently teaching at Grossmont College and Alliant International University (formerly known as USIU).

Charles John Kovach (M.A. 1994) has been an adjunct professor in English at San Diego City College since 1994. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Southwestern College in Chula Vista, teaching English and ESL. Charles also teaches ESL classes at SDSU and UCSD. Charles has published nine teaching tip articles in *Teaching English In the Two-Year College*, a refereed journal published by the

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L-R, standing: Shin Fukuda, Satoshi Enoue, and Hiroko Baba assist Dr. Gawron (seated) in his study of Japanese frame semantics.

Alumni Profiles

Virginia Guleff is active in the ESL community



Virginia Guleff, a 1996 graduate, is Administrator of the ESOL program at San Diego City College.

Virginia Guleff has put her M.A. in Applied Linguistics to good use since graduating from SDSU in 1996. She has continually drawn on her SDSU training and experiences, as well as her relationships with Linguistics department mentors to make solid contributions to English language teaching practice and pedagogy.

After graduation, Virginia began as a lecturer in the Linguistics and Rhetoric and Writing Studies departments. In 1997, she moved on to her current position as full-time ESL Instructor at San Diego City College, and was elected Administrator of the ESOL Program in 1998. In 2000, she received tenure. Not only has she been a dynamic classroom instructor at City College, but instrumental in revamping the curriculum. One of her proudest accomplishments was taking a leadership role integrating oral communication and reading courses into the established ESL writing program.

In addition to full-time teaching and coordinating at City, Virginia has collaborated with Linguistics professors to publish ESL textbooks. She co-authored her first book, *Interactions II Multiskills* with Dr. Debbie Poole and Emily Thrush. The second text, *Tapestry I Reading*, was written with Carol Lowther and published by Heinle and Heinle. Virginia is currently working on a third text to be included in Dr. John's genre series of Advanced ESL Composition, designed to apply theories of genre and socio-literacy to

classroom writing activities. Also, Virginia recently wrote, "Pre-writing as Apprenticeship to Communities of Practice" in Lawrence Earlbaum's 2001 book *Genres in the Classroom*, edited by Dr. Johns.

Besides full-time teaching and textbook authorship, Virginia has also led teacher training workshops at various local community college campuses, supporting regional CATESOL, and presenting her research and ideas at professional conferences. Her most recent presentation "Expanding Notions of Pre-writing Strategies" was at the TESOL 2002 Conference in Salt Lake City.

When asked which aspects of the Applied Linguistics program most prepared her for the work world, Virginia answered, "from Syntax to Phonology to Materials Development, I can't think of one course that didn't help me learn to think analytically, recognize errors in student writing, or develop a theory to implement in the classroom."

These days, despite her busy teaching and administrative schedule, Virginia devotes her time to her husband and 18-month old son, Alexander. She enjoys many activities including Afro-Cuban dance, reading mystery novels, knitting, watching documentaries, and playing the piano. Finally, Virginia is looking forward to continuing her contributions to the community of ESL instructors and students as she transfers to Miramar College in the fall.

~Mary Richardson

Sarah Kriz pursuing M.A. and Ph.D. at UCSB



Sarah Kriz, who enjoys researching the psycholinguistic aspects of speech, looks forward to a career as a professor and researcher.

How does she fit it all in? Sarah Kriz is pursuing both an M.A. in Linguistics and a Ph.D. in Psychology at UCSB. While carrying a full load, she works 20 hours a week in a psychology lab and another 10 hours as a Linguistics department T.A.—and still finds time to rollerblade and read Russian history and Russian literature. Dr. Choi remembers Sarah as "a great student who truly loved linguistics and research in child language development; she was our outstanding graduating student in 1999." Sarah's love for her work is evident as she talks about her experiences.

Sarah began her undergraduate studies majoring in communicative disorders, but when she took Linguistics 101 with Rebecca Meyer her first semester, she immediately switched majors. Upon taking her first Linguistics class, she "loved everything about it."

During Sarah's junior year she began working in Dr. Judy Reilly's child language lab at SDSU (affiliated with the UCSD). The lab is conducting a longitudinal study of general cognitive development and communicative disorders, and Sarah worked with undergraduate students using the lab's transcription system. Sarah continued this work during her senior year, and after receiving her B.A. in 1999, she decided to work for another year before starting graduate school. Sarah began conducting her own research in Dr. Reilly's lab and, under a separate grant headed by Dr. Ruth Berman at Tel Aviv University, she also worked on a cross-linguistic study of literacy.

Sarah began graduate school at UC Santa Barbara in Fall 2000, and is now collecting data for her MA thesis, which focuses on gesture and reference, "looking at how people use deictic gestures (i.e., pointing) when they are talking, and how these gestures relate to the linguistic forms that are being used." Sarah's work toward her Ph.D. dissertation includes mechanical understanding research funded by a grant from the U.S. Navy. Sarah's focus is evaluating how well people learn from different visual formats. Her current research is on language production and eye movements—that is, while people are describing a picture or scene, what are they looking at? In connection with this research, Sarah recently spent two weeks in Sweden, observing Dr. Ruth Bademan's research at an eye-tracking lab at Lund University.

Sarah's long-range goal is to become a researcher and a professor. She loves teaching because she likes "getting to know the students and motivating them to pursue linguistics." But she loves research more. "I would be happy doing research all the time."

Sarah fondly remembers her days at SDSU. "When I was considering further study in linguistics, the faculty were more than willing to take the time to talk to me about my interests and the graduate programs that were suitable for me. Without their support, I would have had a much harder time getting to where I am now. This supportiveness is what I appreciate most about SDSU."

~ Barbara Fish

Recent Master's Theses

Spring 2002

Cheryl Livingston, *Linguistic and Interactional Features of Moderated Internet Chats*

Laurie Woods, *An Analysis of an ESL Academic Speaking Placement Test*

Fall 2001

Minoru Saito, *Spatial Expressions of Motion Events in Japanese*

Junko Ikeda, *Caregiver Input in Japanese: Focus on Nouns and Verbs*

Amir Yousof Farahmandi, *Teaching Farsi as a Less Commonly Taught Language*

Victoria B. Lannen, *Teaching English as a Second Language to Russian-speaking Adults*

Summer 2001

Magda Georges, *Developing an Evaluation Plan for Intermediate Adult ESL Students: New Mandates and Methods*

Paula Miller, *A Linguistic Look at a Legal Issue: Prescription Drug Television Advertising*

Brooke Stern, *The Role of Written and Spoken Text in the Hebrew School Classroom*

Julie Williams, *Biology Students in First College Semester: Evaluation of Values, Literacies, and Learning Strategies*

Spring 2001

Queenie Chaturongkagul, *Thai as a Less-Commonly Taught Language*

Haekyung Kim, *Teacher-Student Interaction in Korean Classrooms*

Alumni News continued...

National Council of Teachers of English. His work has also appeared in other periodicals, including the U.S. Department of Education's *ESL Notes*—publication of the Iowa Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts. He has presented papers on teaching at many conferences. Besides teaching and writing, he enjoys being a volunteer referee and umpire for Special Olympics. Charles can be reached at ckovach@sdccd.net

Potchane Potchanakorn (M.A. 1994) is working as a news translator and reporter for a TV station in Thailand. Potchane enjoys her work because she always has the chance to see and interview prominent people, including President Bush. Potchane can be reached at mpotchi@hotmail.com

Bruce Hawkins (B.A. 1977) was promoted to Professor in the Department of English at Illinois State University in 2001. Also in 2001, he published the co-edited *Language and Ideology 1: Theoretical Cognitive Approaches*, John Benjamins (he wrote the introductory chapter: "Incorporating Tensions: on the treatment of ideology in cognitive linguistics"), and he published "Ideology, Metaphor and Iconographic Reference," the lead article in *Language and Ideology 2: Descriptive Cognitive Approaches*, John Benjamins. Bruce was awarded a sabbatical for 2002.

Retiring Faculty and Staff continued..

relationship with the Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, Dr. Johns has a number of projects in the works. To mention a few, she is editing a textbook to be released soon: *Addressing Diversity in the Classroom* (University of Michigan Press), which will address the needs of a diverse

student population based on ethnicity, linguistic differences, and disabilities. She is chief editor for a Houghton-Mifflin composition textbook series and has applied to edit an ESL journal. And, of course, there are the grandchildren to enjoy!

~John Cox

Diane Novitsky moves to new part-time position

All of us know how important Diane has been to us, our students and the department for more than two decades. She was often the first contact our graduate students and new faculty had with the department and she was skilled at making them feel at home. She prodded us about deadlines as she took care of the details of uncounted reports before we could get to them. Our department has been a welcoming and comfortable place to be and we owe a large debt to Diane for helping to make this possible.

~Charlotte Webb, Undergraduate Advisor

No, that's not her evil twin you see on campus, it's really Diane Novitsky, the one who originally made her mark on the SDSU community with her stellar administrative work in the Department of Linguistics, and she's back on campus doing the things she does best, all for the benefit of the SDSU community.

When the Department of student affairs learned of Diane's availability in late July, they knew she was just the person to fill the recently created post of adviser to the newest student group on campus—The Overly Proud Grandmothers Student Union. It seems her legendary baby picture sharing, cute story telling, child language acquisition-updating, and just general proud grandma-ing attracted a whole heap of attention among university officials, the result being that she was immediately courted for the position. Though she resisted, they pursued her

like a bound root in search of an affix. Apparently, in the end, she just couldn't turn down that fat paycheck.

When her term with OPGSU ends, Diane plans on traveling around the world on a 30 foot yacht that she and husband "Big" Al Novitsky intend to purchase with her new salary. [Actually, since retiring from the Linguistics Department, Diane is working part-time for the College of Education as a grant administrator.]

~Paul Justice



After 30 years as the Linguistics department administrative coordinator, Diane Novitsky semi-retired so that she can spend more time with her grandchildren.

Alumni—your classmates would love to hear from you!

Please contact Yasmine Panahi at ypanahi@mail.sdsu.edu, and we will include your information in the next issue of *Distinctive Features*



After his talk, Dr. Rickford was the guest of honor at a faculty/student reception hosted by Dr. Ann Johns.

Fall Speaker

John Rickford presents research on African-American vernacular

On November 30, Dr. Rickford (Stanford University) spoke to an interdisciplinary, standing-room-only crowd of SDSU students, faculty, and community members. Dr. Rickford is well-known for his research on African-American Vernacular. His talk, "The (Neglected) Crisis Facing African American Students in Schools, and the (Misunderstood) Role of Spoken Soul (yes, Ebonics!) Therein" was interesting and informative, and generated a lot of discussion. The large audience was not disappointed!

Dr. Rickford first presented statistical evidence showing the need for new approaches to help keep African-American students' language arts performance on par with that of their peers. He then discussed the attempt by the Oakland school district to recognize that many African-American students have a language background other than Standard American English (SAE). The Oakland School Board's 1996 resolution to help students learn SAE touched off a politically charged national Ebonics debate.

Dr. Rickford explained that linguists have much to contribute to the ongoing debate about the role of dialect in education. Linguistic evidence can demonstrate the complexity and validity of African-American Vernacular as a language. Dr. Rickford showed a short video clip in which elementary school children used techniques of contrastive analysis to recognize and explain the differences between the vernacular and SAE. He also presented evidence from both the United States and Sweden in favor of teaching the standard dialect while simultaneously affirming the vernacular.

Dr. Rickford has authored many publications regarding African-American vernacular. His most recent book on the subject, *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English*, was co-authored with his son, Russell J. Rickford. Links to academic papers, bibliographies, and other resources related to Ebonics and education can be found on Dr. Rickford's website at www.stanford.edu/~rickford.

~Liz Flynn