THE WILLIAM & MARY LINGUISTICS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

Faculty Highlights

Welcome to the W&M Linguistics Program!

We are excited to welcome Assistant Professor Sadhwi Srinivas to her new position at W&M beginning Fall 2024! She will be responsible for teaching (mainly) semantics, syntax, and computational methods courses.

Dr. Srinivas will set up a research lab, involving students in semantics research using formal, experimental, and computational methods. Currently, she studys issues related to cross-linguistic reference - how languages deploy various forms of noun phrases to refer to different types of objects in the world. She is more broadly interested in the morphosyntax and semantics of languages from South Asia and also the relationship between language and cognition.
"I look forward to working with the brilliant linguists at W&M (students and colleagues) on many exciting research projects in the years to come!"

Fellowship for Language Documentation

Jack Martin and Linda Wood

Dr. Jack Martin received a Dynamic Language Infrastructure-Documenting Endangered Languages Fellowship for the 2023-24 academic year. The fellowship gives him time to revise a dictionary of the Muscogee (Creek) language that he published in 2000 (with Margaret Mauldin). The second edition will be online and incorporate audio. W&M student Dakota Kinsel (Navajo) has been helping edit the audio. University of Washington grad student Julia Mainzinger (Muscogee) will develop a dictionary app.
Dr. Martin has also been working on a learner's grammar of Muscogee and has been assisting the Mississippi Choctaw with a new dictionary and text collection. On March 11, 2024, he will be part of a panel speaking at Old Dominion University (ODU) on language documentation and reclamation.

Online dictionary:
https://www.webonary.org/muscogee/browse/browse-muscogee/
Panel Event:
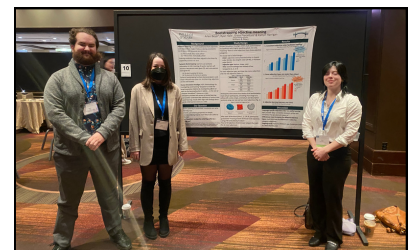https://ilpsodu.rsvpify.com/?securityToken=pQVsPPUD7texLPOgdTDVIuhxBu48EaEY

Student Highlights

This January, W&M sent two current students (Arlen Beyer and Ryan Hale) and one recent graduate (Grace Pierantoni) to the Linguistics Society of America conference to present their work on syntactic bootstrapping with adjectives.
Their project explored adjective order restrictions (AORs). This is the phenomenon in which English speakers would say something like "big, red ball," but never "red, big ball." They were interested in the question, can speakers use this syntactic pattern as a cue to help constrain their hypotheses about the meaning of an unfamiliar adjective?
The study utilizes the human simulation paradigm, simulating a word-learning task by having adult subjects guess the meanings of nonce (made-up) adjectives given a syntactic frame.
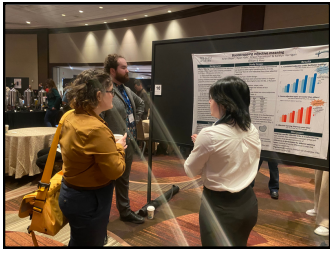The results supported the hypothesis: Subjects performed best in the English-order condition and worst in the random condition. Overall, the findings suggest that kids might be able to utilize adjective order as a cue to guess the semantic sub-category to which an unfamiliar adjective belongs.
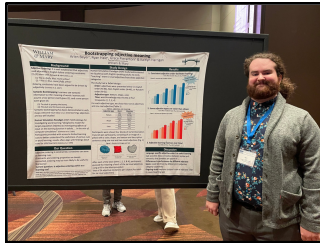

Ryan Hale, Grace Pierantoni, & Arlen Beyer

Arlen Beyer

"I enjoyed LSA and got to meet many other linguists who were all working on exciting projects. There were presentations and posters from all areas of linguistics and dozens of different universities, including from William & Mary professors. I was excited to be able to spend an entire weekend doing nothing but talking about linguistics, and I'm incredibly grateful to have been able to attend. I'm hoping I can attend in the coming years again, as it was an experience that you can't get anywhere else. I'd recommend any other students who get the opportunity to definitely go at least once."
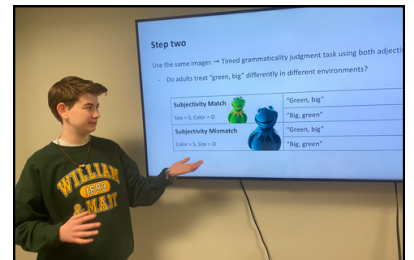
Ryan Hale

"It was amazing getting to step into the world of real linguistics and feel like a real linguist! I got to meet with some W&M linguistics alumni and discuss what they're up to after graduating. I additionally got to attend panels on some specific topics that haven't been extensively discussed in my classes at W&M, such as some cutting-edge research involving the usage of gender-neutral pronouns like singular 'they.' I really appreciate the Charles Center's Research in Motion Travel Grant for fully funding my conference attendance and highly recommend that students look into applying if they need conference funding."

Weekly Linguistics Research Meetings

Each week, students and faculty gather to present research findings, discuss ongoing work, and occasionally pitch quarter-baked project ideas.

Throughout the semester, we hold several workshops and information sessions: honors projects, resume building, graduate school, and more!

Meetings for the Spring 2024 semester are held Fridays from 12-1pm in Tucker Hall, Room 111.

Chloe Wright presenting her upcoming honors thesis study design paradigm

Having Fun On Campus: Fall 2023 Pumpkin Carving

It's not all research! The linguistis of William & Mary get together in the Fall to have a gourd time and show off their pumpkin carving skills!