

Distinctive Features

Summer 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR



Dear friends and alumni of the Department of Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages,

Our department has fallen out of the habit of sending out a newsletter and we thought we'd bring it back to get in touch with our many alumni and friends. We also wanted to share a variety of news with you, including information on our exciting new hires, retirements of long-term faculty, changes and expansions in our curricula, and a variety of events we continue to host.

Like all of you, we responded to the challenges brought on by the global pandemic. Our classes switched to virtual mode with little notice in March 2020 and we continue to teach all classes virtually. Students and instructors have stepped up and shown great flexibility and grit in making virtual teaching and learning as successful as possible. We even managed to pull off

a virtual department graduation in May 2020 followed by a second one in May 2021, honoring our graduates with their family and friends attending on Zoom! Despite some success in adapting to the online world, we were very happy to learn that most classes will be conducted in-person in Fall 2021.

In the last four years, we have hired five new tenure-track faculty members to join our Linguistics, Arabic, and Japanese programs. These faculty members bring with them a variety of areas of expertise: Dr. Gabriel Doyle, a computational psycholinguist; Dr. Aaron Dinkin, a sociolinguist; Dr. Dris Soulaïmani, an Arabic linguist; Dr. Naseh Shahri, an applied linguist, and Dr. Yuki Arita, a Japanese linguist. During the same period, two faculty members who have taught here for over 30 years, Dr. Jeffrey Kaplan and Dr. Deborah Poole, retired and completed their FERP (Faculty Early Retirement Program). Just in December 2020, two of our valued lecturers, Ms. Rebecca Egipto and Mr. Paul Justice, retired after teaching linguistics courses in our department for over 20 years. Our former chair and Arabic professor, Dr. Ghada Osman, resigned from San Diego State in 2015 to pursue a career in counselling. Finally, some sad news. In August 2018, Dr. Robert Underhill passed away. Dr. Underhill taught in our department for over 40 years and was on campus even in early 2018 working on research projects.

Our two undergraduate majors in Japanese and Linguistics continue to attract a solid number of students. In addition to that, our new major, Language, Culture, and Society, which includes coursework in Anthropology and Linguistics, began accepting new students in Fall 2020. Two students earned degrees in this major in May 2021! Besides the popular Basic Certificate in Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, we offer a Certificate in Computational Linguistics, and a fairly new certificate in Text Analytics, both of which enroll students interested in the computational and data analytic sides of linguistics. On the language side, we offer a Certificate in Korean Studies. Two cross-disciplinary certificates will debut in Fall 2021, one in the Interdisciplinary Study of Bilingualism and the other in Transcultural Communication, both requiring coursework from several disciplines, providing students with the expertise needed to contribute to and excel in our globalized, interdisciplinary world. We are also pleased to announce a new Basic Certificate in Arabic, a welcome addition to our programs, given the strong demand for Arabic instruction. Our master's program in Linguistics and language programs in Chinese, Filipino, Hebrew, Korean, Persian, Japanese, and Arabic continue to thrive.

The Linguistics Student Association continues to host a colloquium every spring, featuring research talks by students, faculty, and an invited keynote presenter. In addition, the department has organized talks and events featuring prominent linguists in the last few years such as a screening of *Talking Black in America* with Dr. Walt Wolfram, a talk on *Linguistics and Artificial Intelligence* by Dr. Noah Smith and, more recently in October 2020, a talk on *How Trump talks about Latinxs and Mexico* by Dr. Norma Mendoza-Denton.

Our department will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in Spring 2022 and we hope that all of you can participate in the festivities planned for this important milestone. We will keep you informed as more details emerge. In the meantime, we are sending you a [short questionnaire](#) to find out more about you and what you've been up to after completing our programs.

After five and a half years, I will end my role as department chair in August 2021. Dr. Gregory Keating will be the new department chair beginning Fall 2021.

We wish you all the best and hope to see many of you during our 50th anniversary celebration!

Sincerely,
Betty Samraj

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

New Faculty Members.....	2
New Programs	3-4
Faculty	4-6
LSA and Events.....	6-7
Commencement.....	8
Research.....	9
Retirements.....	10
Staff	11

WELCOME, NEW FACULTY MEMBERS!

Dr. Yuki Arita

As a Japanese language professor, Dr. Yuki Arita tries to be attentive to the diverse needs of students and assist them in finding the best methods for learning Japanese language and culture. Knowing that some learn and communicate differently, she has fostered a connection between herself and her students, providing individualized attention to meet their varying needs. She began teaching Japanese at Tennessee in 2007. Following that, she returned to Japan and taught Japanese at Kansai Gaidai University. She then taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Denver before joining SDSU in fall 2020.



Yuki Arita
Assistant Professor
Japanese Language

Dr. Arita specializes in Conversation Analysis, researching how speakers of Japanese accomplish their interactional goals in daily conversations by using both linguistic and non-verbal resources. In her personal life, she enjoys traveling and has visited countries like Australia, Canada, China, New Zealand, Poland, UK, and France. Her most memorable visit was to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in Australia during her study abroad as an undergraduate exchange student.

Written by Justin Ordillas

Dr. Naseh Nasrollahi Shahri

Dr. Shahri worked for several years as an English teacher and teacher-educator before pursuing empirical research at the intersection of linguistics and second language education. Having a passion for teaching and an interest in sociocultural theories and language learning, he moved from Iran to Pennsylvania to study applied linguistics at Penn State. He then became a faculty member at American University in Washington, DC. In 2020, he joined the Department of Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages at SDSU as an Assistant Professor and the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Program Director. His vision is for EAP students to participate in more real-life projects in order to make connections between their experiences, their home languages and academic English to further develop their language repertoires. Dr. Shahri can often be found mentoring TAs, fellows, and linguistics students, running a bi-weekly book club, and practicing surfing and running the local trails. Currently, he uses discourse analysis and ethnographic approaches to understand the intersection of learning, identity, and experience in the development of multilingual speakers/writers. His research focuses on how students learn academic language, the lived experience of socialization into academic language, and the identities formed throughout the process of becoming a successful second language writer.



Naseh Nasrollahi Shahri
Assistant Professor
Applied Linguistics and
EAP Program Director

Written by Jeremy Mize

NEW MAJOR AND CERTIFICATES

LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY MAJOR

The new major in language, culture, and society offers an exploration of the relation between language, social factors and culture. It also explores how language is shaped by, and in turn shapes, our understandings about the world, social relations, identities, and power. This major offers a coherent interdisciplinary curriculum with coursework that will provide theories and analytical frameworks to explore language use and variation across cultures and social contexts. Students receive foundational knowledge of the two disciplines, linguistics and anthropology, and will be immersed in sustained inquiry of social, cultural and linguistic systems, with a focus on the interdependence of these systems. The major enables students to perform analyses of language use to investigate the nature of language and power, language use and identity construction, language and world-view, gendered speech, discourse styles and social roles and relations, and cultural traditions and language arts. The major also involves consideration of issues of bilingualism and multilingualism, and related issues of language ideology and policy.



BASIC CERTIFICATE IN TRANSCULTURAL COMMUNICATION



The certificate in transcultural communication prepares students for an increasingly globalized world for success in workplaces where multiple language backgrounds and cultural systems intersect. Students completing this certificate will acquire language and cultural expertise, and an interdisciplinary understanding of cross-cultural communication, enabling them to identify and build on the strengths offered by linguistic and cultural pluralism to create solutions for problems in the 21st century. Students complete 18 units of coursework focusing on language and cultural variation, including courses in Language, Culture, and Society, Anthropology, and Linguistics. Some of the certificate requirements can also be met by study abroad or a fourth semester foreign language course.

BASIC CERTIFICATE IN ARABIC

The past few decades have witnessed remarkable growth in the political, economic, and cultural significance of the Arab World for the US. This certificate in Arabic offers students the opportunity to engage in study that seeks to understand the region's language and cultural complexities. In addition to advancing student linguistic skills, the certificate in Arabic will provide students with an understanding of Arabic culture. Completion of this certificate will offer students professional opportunities, both locally and globally, in our increasingly interconnected world. Students complete 14 upper division units of coursework in Arabic.



NEW PROGRAMS (CONT'D)

BASIC CERTIFICATE IN THE INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF BILINGUALISM



The certificate provides students with an interdisciplinary understanding of bilingualism, drawing on developments in various academic areas that includes the intersection of multilingual development and language disorders, language policy and planning, language variation in sociocultural contexts, multilingual/bilingual language acquisition, and teacher education. Grounded in a linguistic perspective on bilingualism, the certificate offers students the choice to pursue bilingualism studies in a

number of ways, based both on students' prior educational expertise and future career trajectories. The certificate requires completion of a core course in bilingualism, an upper division course on general linguistics, and elective courses offered by the departments of Spanish and Portuguese, Speech Language and Hearing Sciences, Dual Language and English Learner Education, American Indian Studies, Anthropology, and Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages (13-15 units).

FACULTY

From left to right

Dr. Eniko Csomay

Dr. Betty Samraj

Dr. Yoshiko Higurashi

Dr. Aaron Dinkin

Dr. Naseh Nasrollahi Shahri

Dr. Zheng-sheng Zhang

Dr. Yuki Arita

Dr. Jean Mark Gawron

Dr. Robert Malouf

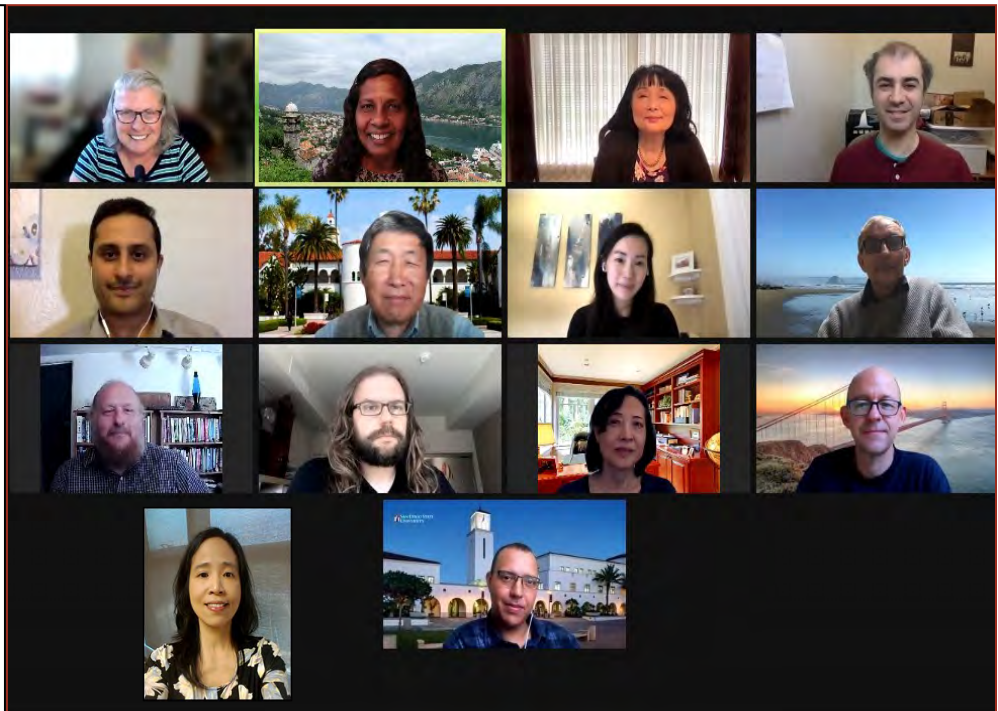
Dr. Gabriel Doyle

Dr. Ryu Kitajima

Dr. Gregory Keating

Dr. Ruey-Jiuan Regina Wu

Dr. Dris Soulaïmani



MEET OUR JUNIOR FACULTY MEMBERS

Dr. Dris Soulaïmani

Dr. Dris Soulaïmani teaches Arabic and Linguistics and also directs the Arabic program. Dr. Soulaïmani grew up in Casablanca, Morocco, speaking both Arabic and Amazigh, which eventually catalyzed his lifelong interest in helping students acquire other languages, particularly, Standard Arabic.

After completing his undergraduate studies in Morocco, where he also briefly studied Russian, Dr. Soulaïmani attended graduate school at Wayne State University in Michigan, where he studied theoretical linguistics. It was there, while doing his thesis in morphology, that he discovered his passion for more applied topics, specifically sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, with which he could connect language knowledge with social issues. His interests landed him at UCLA, where he was anything but a typical Ph.D. student. While working on his Ph.D., Dr. Soulaïmani coordinated UCLA's Arabic program on



Dris Soulaïmani
Associate Professor
Arabic and Linguistics

top of teaching language pedagogy and Arabic language classes, ultimately earning him a coveted Distinguished Teaching Award.

In 2018 he joined the Linguistics Department at SDSU, bringing with him a wealth of experience working with students from diverse backgrounds in both the U.S. and the Middle East. His current research focuses on discourse analysis, language ideologies and Arabic heritage language learning.

On a larger scale, Dr. Soulaïmani is committed to helping create an inclusive, student-centered environment by making Arabic and linguistics more approachable - a place where students can be truly engaged. Dr. Soulaïmani also enjoys the outdoors, traveling, and soccer.

Written by Michael Stephens

Dr. Gabriel Doyle

Dr. Gabriel Doyle has been an Assistant Professor with the Department of Linguistics at San Diego State University for a few years now, but his career and his contributions to the field extend far further than his comparatively short time here. Dr. Doyle received his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of California at San Diego in 2014, where he worked in the University's Computational Psycholinguistics lab during his time as a graduate student. Originally a student of mathematics, Dr. Doyle learned to apply his mathematical talent to his new field in the form of computational modelling. After completing his Ph.D. at UCSD, he served as a postdoctoral fellow at Stanford University. In time, Dr. Doyle would return to San Diego, taking up a professorship at our own University.

As a Computational Psycholinguist, Dr. Doyle's research could be described as a marriage of mathematical language models and big data sources for the purposes of establishing a better understanding of how we communicate. He has in the past performed research using Twitter data and Bayesian inversion to map dialects accurately, as well as on audience design, specifically in speech between adults and children. More recently, Dr. Doyle has performed research using Twitter data to investigate group identities in political discourse. He has also recently investigated the use of Bayesian modelling within the context of belief in conspiracy theories.



Gabriel Doyle
Assistant Professor
Computational Psycholinguist
Digital Humanities

Written by Garrett Lowery

MEET OUR JUNIOR FACULTY MEMBERS (CONT'D)

Dr. Aaron Dinkin

Aaron Dinkin, Ph.D., joined the department in 2017 after teaching at the University of Toronto (2013-2017) and Swarthmore College (2009-2013). He earned his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania in 2009.

His research focuses on the nature and causes of differences between dialect regions, such as why a dialect boundary exists where it does and whether features are diffused from one region to another or reinforced by social/institutional structures. Additionally, he explores the structural nature of linguistic variables, and the relationship between phonetic and phonological change.

Recently, he investigated responses to 'Thank you.' This emerged from an introductory assignment in his sociolinguistics class where students elicit rapid,



Aaron Dinkin
Assistant Professor
Sociolinguistics,
Language Variation
and Change

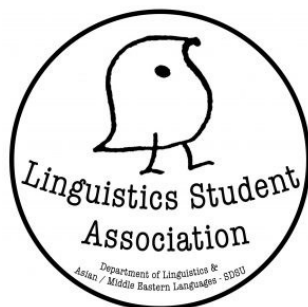
anonymous responses for analysis. From these data, a full study has been developed. The assignment has been adopted by instructors at other universities and he looks forward to combining data sets collected across multiple communities.

Many of the courses he teaches pertain to language variation and change, including Sociolinguistics, Historical Linguistics, Dialects of English and the core course for the new major, Language, Culture, and Society. He's proud to provide an accessible route for learning about the role of language in society.

Outside the department, he enjoys participating in the annual MIT Mystery Hunt and was a member of the organizing teams in 2006 and 2011. He has an impressive theater background as a performer, music director, and dialect coach.

Written by Shane Taylor

LINGUISTICS STUDENT ASSOCIATION



Every spring the Linguistics Student Association hosts an annual colloquium. Linguists are invited to present and discuss current topics.

44th Annual Linguistics Student Association Spring Colloquium

May 7, 2021

Towards Equitable Language Technologies

Dr. Su Lin Blodgett, Microsoft Research Montréal

May 21, 2021

On the Origin of the 'Creole' Inflectional Paradigm

Dr. Fabiola S. Henri, University at Buffalo

Visit the LSA
Facebook page [here](#)

RECENT EVENTS

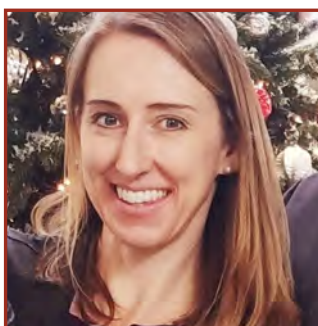
WORKSHOPS

In April 2021, we conducted a professional development workshop on “***Bridging the Academic-Professional Spheres in the TESOL Profession.***” It was organized around issues that address the acculturation of graduate students into the field of TESOL. The workshop leaders were successful alumni and prominent ESL professionals from California Community Colleges.

This year the presenters were Vickie Mellos, Assistant Professor, Palomar College (MA, 2011), Jessica Pardoe, Professor, Santa Rosa College (MA, 2012) and Jessica Whitsett, Professor, Southwestern College (MA, 2008).



Vickie D. Mellos



Jessica Pardoe



Jessica Whitsett



Dr. Greg Keating, our graduate advisor, conducted a workshop on “***Applying to Ph.D. programs in Linguistics***” in April 2021. This workshop provided an overview of the Ph.D. application process as well as a detailed discussion of application materials.

TALKS

We organized two talks co-sponsored with other departments in the College of Arts and Letters in 2020/2021.

- Co-sponsored with the Department of Chicana/Chicano Studies:

How Trump Talks about Latinxs and Mexico

Dr. Norma Mendoza-Denton, University of California, Los Angeles

- Co-sponsored with the Department of Women’s Studies:

Language in the Middle: Class and Sexual Discourse in Delhi

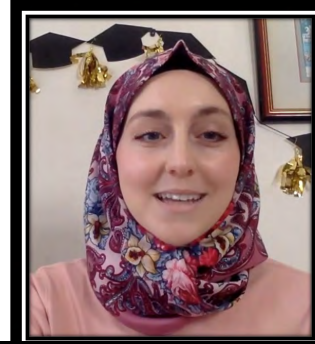
Dr. Kira Hall, University of Colorado, Boulder

VIRTUAL COMMENCEMENT

In May 2021, we held our second virtual commencement ceremony! More than 100 students, faculty, friends, and family joined the celebration of our graduates! This year, we graduated two students in our new major, Language, Culture, and Society, which debuted in Fall 2020; nine Japanese majors; 22 Linguistics majors; and 18 students with an MA in Linguistics. We wish our graduates all the best!



2021 Japanese
Outstanding Graduating Senior
Martin R. Martinez
Most Influential Faculty
Dr. Ryu Kitajima



2021 Linguistics
Outstanding Graduating Senior
Thena Livingstone
Most Influential Faculty
Dr. Eniko Csomay

Congratulations, Class of 2021!

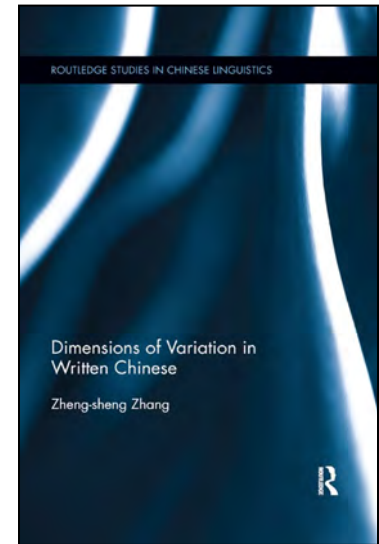
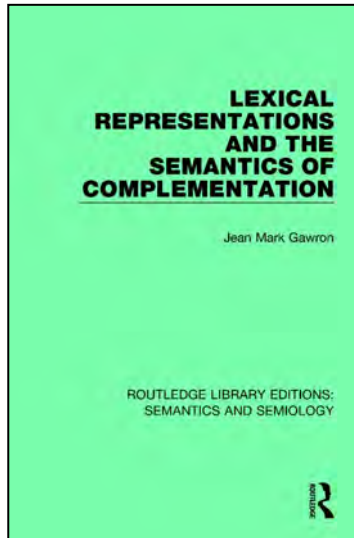
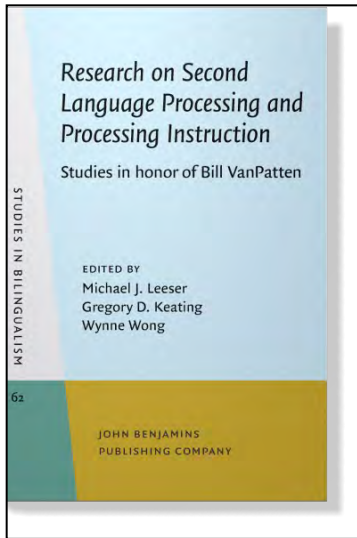


See list of recent MA theses [here](#).

FACULTY RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Our faculty continue to conduct research and publish in a variety of areas, including conversational analysis, corpus linguistics, computational linguistics, discourse analysis, English for academic purposes, foreign language teaching, morphology, sociolinguistics, and second language acquisition. See recent faculty publications [here](#).

Recent books published by our faculty:



PROFESSOR ZHENG-SHENG ZHANG RECEIVES A FULBRIGHT AWARD

Professor Zheng-sheng Zhang received a Fulbright award to spend the next academic year (2021-2022) at the International University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan, where he will research the language of the Dungan Muslims who left China 150 years ago to settle in Central Asia. Dungan is primarily spoken in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and Chinese characters are no longer used in writing. Instead, the Dungans have used Arabic, Latin, and the Cyrillic scripts at various times. Another noteworthy feature of the Dungan people is that they have retained many old customs and words that are no longer found in China. Professor Zhang hopes to find out more about various



linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of this unique test case of a Chinese dialect not using Chinese characters and gain a better understanding of the relationship between the Chinese language and its script, script reform, and

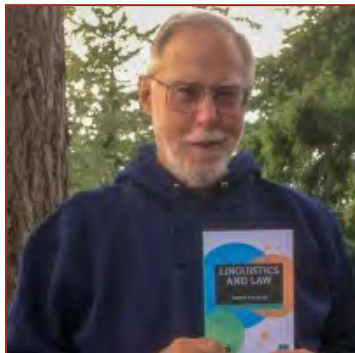
language preservation.

Professor Zhang is most looking forward to being in Kyrgyzstan in person. An added attraction is that he will be close to the place he grew up in Xinjiang in Northwest China and he can again hear the familiar sounds of Northwest Mandarin from his childhood.

Congratulations to Professor Zhang!

RETIREMENTS

In the last few years, the department saw the retirement of four faculty members, two tenured faculty and two lecturers.



Jeffrey Kaplan taught at San Diego State University from 1976 to 2019, offering courses in general linguistics such as syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and history of linguistics. He received a J.D from the University of San Diego in 1994 and has provided legal consulting to attorneys on legal cases as an expert for issues of language. He applied his legal expertise at SDSU by designing and teaching a course on language and law. He served as department chair from 2002-2009. His book *Linguistics and Law* was published in 2019.

Deborah Poole taught at San Diego State University from 1989 to 2020. During this time, she taught courses in applied linguistics and directed our department's multi-leveled English for Academic Purposes composition program for international students and English learners. In this capacity, she mentored many new teachers. She also served as faculty coordinator for The Looking Glass Neighborhood, an after-school, service-learning program held at Rosa Parks Elementary in City Heights. Over the years, this program brought together hundreds of SDSU undergraduates and Rosa Parks children in an innovative play- and literacy-focused setting through which SDSU students conduct field-research related to their linguistics classes.



Rebecca Egipto taught in our department from 1997 to 2020. She taught Linguistics 420: Linguistics and English, Linguistics 452: Language Acquisition, and Linguistics 350: Language and Politics. From 2016 to 2020, she served as undergraduate advisor for the department.



Paul Justice also taught in our department from 1997 to 2020. He taught Linguistics 420: Linguistics and English, Linguistics 430: English Grammar for Prospective Teachers, and Linguistics 352: Language and Advertising.

STAFF



Cassie Neel has been in the Department of Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages since Spring 2016. Her main duties are budget management, class scheduling, travel, faculty workload, office manager, and hiring/training students.

Prior to working for the department, Cassie was with the SDSU Research Foundation for 2.5 years working in the Department of Child and Family Development. She has her BA in Liberal Studies from SDSU and MA in History from UC Irvine. Cassie also volunteers as senior adviser for Mortar Board, an honors society for college seniors and is the former Vice President of the local Fulbright Association alumni chapter. Cassie enjoys hikes with her family, traveling, and yoga.

Darlene Bych started with the department in Spring 2019. She is responsible for periodic evaluations, Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion (RTP), tenure-track hiring, faculty appointment process, commencement, Japanese Studies Institute support, marketing materials and social media.



Prior to joining SDSU, Darlene held positions in marketing and communications, event and trade show planning, and office management. She graduated from University of Redlands with a BS in Business Management. Darlene enjoys the San Diego beaches, boating, and spending time with family.



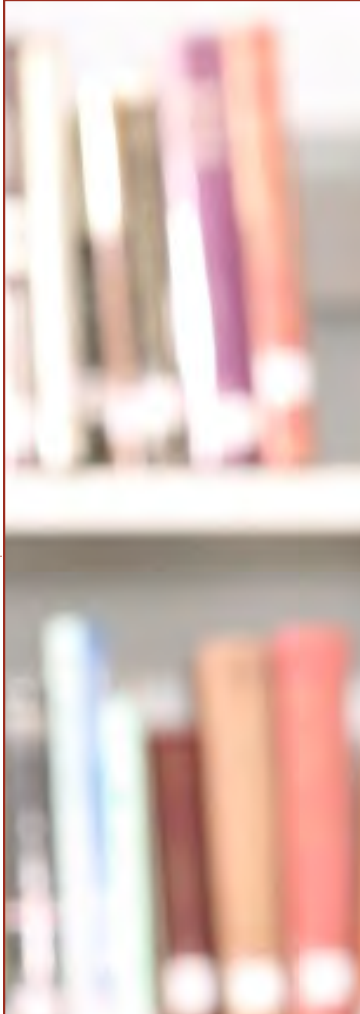
Yasmine Panahi has been with the Department of Linguistics for over 20 years. She is the administrative coordinator for the graduate and certificate programs.

Prior to working for the department, Yasmine worked at Immunetech Pharmaceuticals as a research assistant and later at the American Language Institute. She has a BS in Biology from the University of Tehran and moved to San

Diego to pursue an MS degree in Microbiology. Yasmine is also involved with the Persian Club.

Distinctive Features is published by the Department of Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages at SDSU.

Department Chair Dr. Betty Samraj
Production and Design Darlene Bych
Administrative Assistance Cassie Neel



WEB
linguistics.sdsu.edu



FACEBOOK
[SDSU Linguistics](#)

5500 Campanile Drive
Storm Hall West 214
San Diego, CA 92182-7727
Phone: 619-594-0772
lingassistant@sdsu.edu



SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Linguistics and
Asian/Middle Eastern Languages
College of Arts and Letters