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Professor, Department of English
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Education

PhD, Linguistics, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Key Interests

Information-Theoretic Models | Computational Psycholinguistics | Learning-Based Models of Language Acquisition and Use | Computational Models of Morphological Segmentation

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SELECT PUBLICATIONS

- › J. P. Blevins. *Word and paradigm morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University press. (2016).
- › J. Geertzen *et al.*, The informativeness of linguistic unit boundaries. *Italian Journal of Linguistics* 28(2), 1–24 (2016).
- › J. P. Blevins *et al.*, The Zipfian paradigm cell filling problem. *In Perspectives on Morphological Structure: Data and Analyses*, eds. F. Kiefer, J. P. Blevins, and H. Bartos. Leiden: Brill, 141–158 (2017).
- › R. H. Baayen *et al.*, The discriminative lexicon. *Complexity, Special Issue on Cognitive Network Science: A New Frontier*, 1–39 (2019).

Research Focus

I am a general linguist with a primary focus on the structure, learning, and processing of complex inflectional and grammatical systems. My research approaches these issues from the standpoint of word and paradigm morphological models and constraint-based syntactic frameworks, using analytic tools and insights drawn from cognitively-grounded information-theoretic and discriminative perspectives. I have complementary interests in computational models of grammatical systems, and the use of robust computational techniques to address traditional linguistic questions, and the study of aspects of sound patterns and meaning that interact closely with grammar. These approaches and techniques are instrumental in the latest paradigm shift in the language sciences. The resulting probabilistic and data-driven conceptions place the study of language and linguistics on new foundations that allow these subjects to participate in the 'big data' revolution.

Current Projects

- Project: Demarcating linguistic units
Issue: There are no cross-linguistically valid definitions of 'words' or other units
Goal: Define units in terms of robust statistical regularities that recur across languages
- Project: Estimating morphological sparsity
Issue: The input that a speaker encounters is sparser and more biased than previously assumed. But it is not known exactly how the structure of the input varies across languages
Goal: Estimate inflectional (and derivational) family size from corpora in typologically diverse languages
- Project: Representational agnosticism
Goal: Reformulate unit-based descriptions of linguistic inventories in terms of system-base characterizations in terms of editing distance and other relations between independent forms