WINTER STORM 2010

IGERT program at UMD: Biological and Computational Foundations of Language Diversity

Between January 11 and 22, 2010 Winter Storm brought together graduate students and faculty from 11 departments to participate in an intensive two-week workshop offered by the University of Maryland NSF-IGERT program. The workshop aimed to provide the opportunity for hands-on skill development, interdisciplinary communication, and collaborative team-building. This year, students' initiative and participation was outstanding. Twenty-three students played an active role in the planning, organization, and execution. Eight graduate students from various departments including Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, Psychology, Hearing and Speech, and Computer Science formed the organizing committee, and fifteen students organized various Winter Storm sessions.

PROGRAM

Morning Methods:
During the Morning Methods sessions, IGERT students led 2-hour tutorials and introduced participants to software and hardware applications relevant to language research. Examples include: Statistics & R, Infant Study methods, Eye Tracking, MEG methods, Machine Learning with Weka, EEG methods, and Phonetic Analysis with Praat.

Lunch Talks:
The lunch talks were organized to help students learn more about the diversity of language-related research opportunities on campus. Invited speakers included faculty from different departments: Tom Carlson (Psychology), Philip Resnik (Linguistics), Yasmeen Shah (Hearing and Speech), Dan Butts (Biology), Jon Sprouse (UC Irvine), and Jared Novick (CASL). Lunch sessions provided participants not only with the opportunity to enjoy the great meals made possible by "lunch elves" (aka IGERT students), but also with food for thought.

Research Groups:
The unifying themes for this year's research group activities were language diversity and cross-linguistic variation. On the first two days of the workshop, organizers led sessions on language typology. Six different research groups were then formed, each group collaboratively working on the development of group research projects. Research topics included the following: reflexives, theory of mind and language acquisition; learnability in second language acquisition/bilingualism; ferrets, phonemes, pfun!; language disorders; the development of the parser in L1 and L2; and memory and language ERPs.

Winter Storm 2010 by numbers

Duration - 2 weeks
Faculty members – 11
Students - 56
Departments - 11
Workshops - 8
Lunch talks – 6
Research groups - 7
Sandwiches eaten – 300

Winter Storm 2010 components

- **Morning Methods**
- **Lunch Talks**
- **Research Groups**
- **the I-95 Summit**

We think Winter Storm 2010 was a tremendous success, and everyone looks forward to another "flurry" of activities in 2011.

Report prepared by Sunyoung Lee-Ellis and Anna Lukyanchenko, SLA Program

I-95 SUMMIT

A new activity this year was the I(GERT)-95 Summit, in which IGERT participants from along the I-95 Corridor (University of Pennsylvania, University of Delaware, Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland) shared ideas and methods on a topic of common interest. This year's topic was "Learning sound systems." Visiting presenters included Charles Yang, Dan Swingley, Jeff Heinz, and Colin Wilson.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Winter Storm 2010 provided great opportunities for socializing with participants from other disciplines, including an informal gathering at a local venue in College Park, a "mid-storm" party, and a goodbye party at Franklin's, Hyattsville.