The Linguistics Student Association of CSULB
Presents:

TALK TALK: A BROWN BAG SERIES

12:30-1PM DR. COLLEEN AHLAND, LECTURER IN LINGUISTICS
On the documentation of Daats'íin, a previously unknown language of northwestern Ethiopia

1 - 1:30PM SERGIO SANDOVAL, GRAD STUDENT IN LINGUISTICS
On "discourse-based" ergativity in Tibetan

L.S.A
CSULB

MCC CONFERENCE ROOM

F03 ROOM 02

12:30PM-1:30PM, MARCH 20, 2018

Presentation Summaries:

Dr. Colleen Ahland

Daats'iin [dtn] is a B'aga language (Nilo-Saharan?) spoken by less than 1000 people in northwestern Ethiopia near the Sudan border. The language is closely related to Gumuz [guk] and up until 2013, scholars were not aware that either the langauge or the people existed. Dr. Ahland confirmed the existence of this language and ethnicity in 2014 when she made her first fieldtrip to the area. The B'aga languages exhibit typological rarities not known to exist in other African languages, e.g. verbal classifiers (Ahland 2010). Furthermore, Daats'iin and the Gumuz languages don't always exhibit the typical patterns found in the neighboring Nilo-Saharan languages and for that reason, at least one linguist has proposed they form an isolate family (Dimmendaal 2011) and should not be considered Nilo-Saharan as they traditionally have (Greenberg 1963, Bender 1997, Ehret 2001). Dr. Ahland will present an overview of her research on Daats'iin which is funded in part by a DEL (Documenting Endangered Languages) fellowship jointly sponsored by NEH and NSF.

Sergio Sandoval

Across Tibeto-Burman languages, ergativity in particular, and case-marking systems in general, have long been a topic of discussion in the fields of historical and descriptive linguistics (DeLancey, 2011). It has been suggested that, unlike split ergative/absolutive systems, some languages exhibit structural patterns in which ergative marking is driven by pragmatic and information-structuring factors that emerge from discourse (DeLancey, 1982; Du Bois, 1987; McGregor & Verstraete, 2010). Such cases have been described as Discourse-based ergative systems (Du Bois, 1987; McGregor, 2010). Mr. Sandoval provides evidence of discourse-based ergativity in Classical Tibetan in the genre of Dharma or Buddhist instruction. The analysis was conducted on two Tibetan Buddhist texts from the Nyingma (Ancient) tradition: 1) An Esoteric Instruction on the Sublime Approach of Ati by Patrul Rinpoche (1808-1887) and 2) Calling the Lama from Afar by Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje.