

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Carmel O'Shannessy, assistant professor of linguistics, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of linguistics, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2006	University of Sydney
M.A.	1995	University of Melbourne
Graduate Diploma in Education	1990	Australia Catholic University

Professional Record:

2007 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Michigan
2006 – 2007	Linguist, Department of Education, Northern Territory Government, Australia

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor O'Shannessy is an innovative and engaging teacher whose repertoire includes courses on sociolinguistics, bilingualism, language contact, field methods, and endangered languages. She also teaches a successful large-enrollment introduction to language course. Her contributions are essential to the undergraduate and graduate curricula in sociolinguistics and related sub-disciplines. Students praise her high standards, commitment to helping them meet those standards, and willingness to serve as a “sounding board” for their ideas. Professor O'Shannessy is a valued mentor to graduate students, honors students, and students in the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP). Her first Ph.D. student defended her dissertation earlier this semester.

Research – Professor O'Shannessy has made seminal contributions to contact linguistics, the intra- and inter-disciplinary study of the linguistic consequences of speakers of two or more languages being in sustained contact with each other. She has discovered and charted the emergence and development of a new Australian language, Light Warlpiri, which emerged due to language contact. By combining experimental and traditional linguistic methods, her work demonstrates the genesis of a new language, its linguistic features, and its transmission to the next generation of speakers. These groundbreaking and influential findings have been published in top-ranked journals and address foundational theoretical questions about the factors that contribute to language development and change.

Recent and Significant Publications:

- “The role of multiple sources in the formation of an innovative auxiliary category in Light Warlpiri, a new Australian mixed language,” *Language*, 89, 2013, pp. 328-353.
- “Code-switched input to children leads to a new mixed language,” *Linguistics*, 50, 2012, pp. 305-340
- “Comprehension of competing argument marking systems in two Australian mixed languages,” with F. Meakins, *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 15, 2011, pp. 378-396.

“Competition between word order and case-marking in interpreting grammatical relations: A case study in multilingual acquisition,” *Journal of Child Language*, 38, 2011, pp. 763-792.

Service – Professor O’Shannessy provides exemplary service to the Department of Linguistics, where she has served on the departmental Executive, Undergraduate, Graduate, and faculty search committees. In service to the profession, she is regularly invited to serve as a reviewer of journals, books, grants, and conferences; she is also a board member for an international journal. Her service to the Lajamanu, Australia community in which she conducts her research sets an exceptionally high bar for giving back to the community.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“She was able to recognise the special status of the kind of ‘light’ Warlpiri spoken by young people in Lajamanu and to investigate its special properties in terms of the wider fields of language contact, historical linguistics, and pidgins and creoles. Her work has been followed by others...but Carmen [sic] should be seen as a pioneer in this area.”

Reviewer (B)

“My assessment of Carmel’s current position in the field is that she is among the forerunners. Her publication record is excellent and is rivalled by few in her cohort. Interestingly, the bulk of her major publications have been produced while at the University of Michigan...”

Reviewer (C)

“...Professor O’Shannessy’s track record is just superb. Her publications in these fields demonstrate a solid knowledge of applied, typological, and theoretical linguistics. An important characteristic of her work has been its depth, breadth, seriousness, and innovation. Dr. O’Shannessy is someone whose work I admire and learn from.”

Reviewer (D)

“As far as I know, compared to other scholars investigating mixed languages, Dr. O’Shannessy is unique in having collected experimental and conversational data involving young children. ...she is also one of the very few people in the world examining the role of children and the input to them in a situation involving multilingualism and language endangerment.”

Reviewer (E)

“My prediction is that now she has broken the ice [with documentation of the birth of a mixed language] we will discover many other cases around the world in the coming decade or two, which will have major ramifications for fields from historical linguistics to language typology, and with her experience she seems likely to lead the charge...”

Reviewer (F)

“Dr. O’Shannessy presents a very strong profile of innovative, cutting-edge research. Her work on Light Warlpiri is certain to be classic reading for anyone interested in mixed languages in particular, and contact linguistics more specifically. O’Shannessy is an outstanding linguist: she is empirically driven but her work is always anchored in, and contributing to, linguistic theory.”

Reviewer (G)

"...Carmel has developed into a well-known international figure in the field of language contact research. Her work is being widely cited, and she is invited to contribute to a number of the key collective volumes that are coming out in this area."

Reviewer (H)

"This...[publication record] is an outstanding achievement for a scholar [of her cohort]; it underscores her ability to carry out research and make it available to the scholarly community. In my opinion, Professor O'Shannessy is a cut above scholars at similar stages in their career who have been promoted and tenured."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor O'Shannessy is one of the leading experts in the study of language contact. Her teaching is as innovative as her research and reflects a scholar who both engages her students and is engaged in their learning. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Carmel O'Shannessy be promoted to the rank of associate professor of linguistics, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Susan A. Gelman
Heinz Werner Distinguished University Professor,
Professor of Psychology and Interim Dean,
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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