

# New Faculty Spotlight

Laurel Brehm



*Can you tell us a bit about your research?*

My research focuses on how people pick one thing out of anything they could say. How people cope with that variability in speaking and listening, then in response and listening. I am interested in cases where people make a mistake.

So if I, as a speaker, say something I did not intend to say, why did I do that in the first place? How do you as the listener understand that is not what I intended? I am particularly interested in how these intersect with questions of different experience. If me, the speaker, and you, the listener, are coming from different backgrounds does this make it more challenging?

This topic is something I have grown into through the years. When in undergrad, I had no idea what I wanted to do. But I took some psychology classes and became interested in the psychology of linguistics. I ended up being a psychology major but focused more on bilingualism and speech disorders. I thought I was going to be a speech language pathologist but it was not right for me. I became interested in the research side of things and the error side of things as well. Why were people making mistakes? I soon found out that it was much more interesting to study the things that categorize the everyday experience rather than disorders. This shifted my trajectory from graduate school onwards.

*Why did you choose to do your work and continue your research here at UCSB?*

I really like the broad approach in the department. Everyone is interested in different things but there are still common threads between all research. I like the emphasis on diversity and equity and on trying to be a good researcher in terms of being a good person as well as doing justice to the material you are

studying. I want to study questions that are useful to all people, not just one group.

*What motivates you to continue your work? Why did you choose linguistics?*

More than anything it's because this is what is interesting to me. It is really cool to think about how people behave with respect to language. I really deeply want to understand what is going on inside the head when people are using language. In order to understand that we need to understand the experiences of different kinds of people.

*What are you excited about doing here at UCSB?*

I am excited to be back in the classroom. I was a research scientist for many years and it's nice to be back. I get to be teaching again! The relatively large undergraduate program is very exciting. I had some amazing mentors when I was an undergraduate and it is very nice to get to pass that on. Being involved in the lab with graduate students is very valuable and I want to pass that on.

*What classes will you be teaching?*

In the fall I will be on maternity leave, we are expecting our second child. I will be teaching Psycholinguistics for both graduate and undergraduate in Winter. Ling 127 and Ling 226.

*What does your life look like outside of research?*

I am very excited about being in Santa Barbara because the weather is nice all year. My family has been taking advantage of that by going hiking, biking, and to the beach. It is great.