

**The Department of Linguistics
is pleased to present**

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speaking on

Vowel deletion as grammatically-controlled gestural overlap in Uspanteko

Friday, October 13, 2023

1:20 - 3:00 PM

in HUM 1 - 210

Abstract:

Uspanteko (Mayan) is spoken by ~5000 people in the central highlands of Guatemala. Unstressed vowels in Uspanteko often delete, though deletion is variable within and across speakers. Deletion appears to be phonological, being sensitive to phonotactics, foot structure, vowel quality, and morphology; and being largely insensitive to speech rate and style. But deletion also appears to be phonetic in character, reflecting extreme vowel reduction rather than symbolic deletion: it is variable, gradient, insensitive to certain phonotactics, and opaque with respect to accent placement.

Electroglottography data suggests that even apparently 'deleted' vowels may contribute voicing to [C(V)C] intervals, albeit inaudibly. We thus analyze deletion as grammatically-controlled gestural overlap, which masks vowels in [CVC] contexts, either in the phonology proper (e.g. Gafos 2002) or as part of a grammar of phonetic interpretation (e.g. Kingston & Diehl 1994).