

# Tianyi Ni

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## Research Profile

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I study how phonetic cue systems become organized into phonological contrasts and prosodic structure, and how such systems are maintained, destabilized, or reorganized through sound change. My work combines formal phonological analysis, acoustic and experimental phonetics, computational modeling, and corpus-based methods, with empirical focus on tone, F0–duration relations, laryngeal phenomena, quantity, metrical structure, and positional asymmetries in Germanic and Southeast Asian languages. A secondary line of work examines word formation, lexical structure, and semantic change in Austroasiatic languages.

**Research interests:** phonology; phonetics; prosodic structure; sound change; production–perception relations; computational and quantitative modeling; tone and laryngeal phonology; metrical structure; positional neutralization; Germanic languages; Southeast Asian linguistics; Austroasiatic languages; corpus morphology.

## Education

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- 2021–present **Ph.D. in Linguistics**, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH  
Dissertation: TBA  
Committee: Rebecca L. Morley, Björn Köhnlén, Cynthia Clopper, Karee Garvin
- 2020–2021 **M.A. in Linguistics**, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ  
Thesis: *The Phonology and Morphology of Siriano: A Grammar Sketch*
- 2018–2021 **M.S. in Applied Mathematics**, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
- 2017–2018 **M.S. in Computer Science**, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ
- 2012–2016 **B.Eng. in Computer Science**, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China

## Publications

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### JOURNAL ARTICLES AND MANUSCRIPTS

- under review **Ni, Tianyi** & Björn Köhnlén. A metrical analysis of ternary vowel quantity in East Frisian Low German. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*.
- in prep. **Ni, Tianyi** & Rebecca L. Morley. A cognitive model for production–perception misalignment. Manuscript in preparation.
- in prep. **Ni, Tianyi** & Andrea Sims. Semantic transparency and productivity of modern Khmer compounds and derivational prefixation. Manuscript in preparation.

### CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

- to appear **Ni, Tianyi**, Yue Yin, & Rebecca L. Morley. Learning near-merger: cue reliability and bidirectional regularization. In *Proceedings of the 2026 Annual Meetings on Phonology*, 1(1). doi:10.7275/amphonology.3047.

- 2026 **Ni, Tianyi** & Rebecca L. Morley. Equilibrium dynamics of near-merger: Functional load effects in Cantonese tone contrast. In *Proceedings of Speech Prosody 2026*. doi:10.21437/SpeechProsody.2026-103.
- 2025 **Ni, Tianyi**. Bidirectional consonantal effects on F0 realization in Burmese. In *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Tone and Intonation*. doi:10.21437/TAI.2025-28.
- 2025 **Ni, Tianyi**, Maike Rocker, & Björn Köhnlein. A metrical analysis of ternary vowel quantity in East Frisian Low German. In *Proceedings of the 2023 and 2024 Annual Meetings on Phonology*, 1(1). doi:10.7275/amphonology.3047.
- 2021 Chen, Juqiang, **Tianyi Ni**, Benjawan Kasisopa, Mark Antoniou, & Catherine Best. SVM-based evaluation of Thai tone imitations by Thai-naïve Mandarin and Vietnamese speakers. In *Proceedings of the 2021 Asia-Pacific Signal and Information Processing Association Annual Summit and Conference*.
- 2021 **Ni, Tianyi**. Burmese sandhi-voicing: From the perspective of emergent phonology. *Coyote Papers*, 24, 15.

#### THESIS

- 2021 **Ni, Tianyi**. *The Phonology and Morphology of Siriano: A Grammar Sketch*. M.A. thesis, University of Arizona.

#### Conference Presentations

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- 2026 **Tianyi Ni**, Yue Yin, & Rebecca L. Morley. Learning near-merger: cue reliability and bidirectional regularization. Talk presented at the *Annual Meeting on Phonology 2026*, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.
- 2026 **Tianyi Ni**. Fossilized Prefixes, Living Compounds? Productivity and Semantic Shift in Khmer Word Formation. Talk presented at the *35th Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society*, Singapore.
- 2026 **Tianyi Ni** & Rebecca L. Morley. Equilibrium dynamics of near-merger: Functional load and contrast persistence. Talk presented at the *20th Conference on Laboratory Phonology*, Montréal, Canada.
- 2026 **Tianyi Ni** & Rebecca L. Morley. Equilibrium dynamics of near-merger: Functional load effects in Cantonese tone contrast. Poster presented at *Speech Prosody 2026*, Philadelphia, PA.
- 2025 Björn Köhnlein & **Tianyi Ni**. Vowels can be shorter before voiced than before voiceless consonants: Reversed durations in two varieties of German. Talk presented at the *31st Manchester Phonology Meeting*, Manchester, UK.
- 2025 **Tianyi Ni**. Bidirectional consonantal effects on F0 realization in Burmese. Poster presented at the *Third International Conference on Tone and Intonation*, Munich, Germany.
- 2024 **Tianyi Ni**, Maike Rocker, & Björn Köhnlein. A metrical analysis of ternary vowel quantity in East Frisian Low German. Poster presented at the *Annual Meeting on Phonology*, Rutgers University, NJ.
- 2022 **Tianyi Ni**. A domain-driven phonological analysis of sandhi-voicing in Modern Burmese. Talk presented at the *31st Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society*, Honolulu, HI.

- 2022 Yuhong Zhu, Ian Cameron, Rebekah Stanhope, Kate Kinnaird, Yazhao Huang, **Tianyi Ni**, & Björn Köhnlein. Can people learn three levels of sonority-sensitive stress? An online experiment. Poster presented at the *18th Conference on Laboratory Phonology*, online.

## Grants, Awards, and Honors

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### RESEARCH GRANTS

- 2023 **Ilse Lehiste Memorial Fund Graduate Research Award**, Department of Linguistics, The Ohio State University  
Project: Metrical structure in Burmese compound sandhi-voicing
- 2022 **Graduate & Professional Student Association Research Grant**, Arizona State University  
Project: Markov Chain Monte Carlo phylogenetic inference in computational historical linguistics

### AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2022 Society of Southeastern Asian Linguistics Travel Award, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
- 2021–2022 University Fellowship, The Ohio State University
- 2020–2021 Office of the President Scholarship, Arizona State University
- 2020 Melikian Center Fellowship, Arizona State University
- 2020 Graduate & Professional Student Association Research Grant, Arizona State University

## Teaching Experience

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### INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD

- 2022–2025 **LING 3902: Language Endangerment and Death**, The Ohio State University
- 2024 **ENGL 0155: Basic Composition**, Columbus State Community College
- 2023–2024 **MATH 150: College Algebra**, Franklin University

### OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2026 **Instructor, North American Computational Linguistics Open Competition**, Metro High School, Columbus, OH  
Topic: segmental and suprasegmental phonology for high school students

## Fieldwork and Empirical Research Experience

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- Autumn 2024 **Megrelian language fieldwork**, Columbus, OH  
Consultant-based elicitation and analysis of Megrelian segmental phonology and metrical structure.

## Technical and Research Skills

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**Programming and modeling:** Python, R, statistical modeling, computational simulation, corpus processing

**Linguistic tools:** Praat, LaTeX, phonetic analysis, corpus linguistics, fieldwork elicitation

**Methods:** experimental design, quantitative modeling, corpus-based morphology, computational historical linguistics, phonological analysis

## Professional Service

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2022 Graduate Student President, Department of Linguistics, The Ohio State University