

Linguistics Demoz Prize Winner 2025

Isaiah DeLeon:

- **How did you first become interested in linguistics?**

I have always been interested in the social sciences, and I remember starting to really get into my education when I started exploring social psychology and eventually taking Dr. D'Onofrio's LING 220: Language and Society class during my sophomore year. I slowly began to realize I had always been interested in language, and this class introduced me to all the ways I could continue studying it.

- **How have you been involved in the Linguistics Department outside of your coursework?**

This year I served as a co-president for the NU Linguistics Student Association. I was able to use my experience with community building from other student orgs to transform our undergraduate involvement. I didn't feel a sense of community among my peers, so I decided to take charge. Overall, I would say our events were a success, and I immediately began to see how our linguistics community began to come together. I am really glad I was able to bring faculty and undergraduates together, and I had such a great time taking this on with Maija, our other co-president!

- **Can you briefly describe any research projects in linguistics that you've been involved with?**

Sure can! The main project I was working on (for a short quarter) was Dr. D'Onofrio's Chicagoland Language Project where I served as an interview transcriber. These interviews were collected to investigate language in the city and to highlight Chicagoan perspectives in research. Although I can't say anything about my specific assigned interview, I had a blast doing this work because I was able to learn more about the city through the story of a Chciagoan. I really fell in love with Chicago during my time at Northwestern, and this project allowed me to learn more about the community in a meaningful way.

- **How do you see your linguistics major fitting into your career plans after graduation?**

Ideally I can continue my work in linguistics research, and I hope to attend grad school to obtain my PhD and become a professor in linguistics. As a professor I want to continue to be a mentor for fellow first-generation, low-income students and to increase research accessibility. Beyond producing more research, I hope to engage with other styles of writing including journalism as a way of disseminating research in a more approachable way. I have written a few stories for the Daily Northwestern in my free time where I discuss queer issues (including queer language!), and I hope to continue this kind of work.

- ***What advice would you have for students considering a linguistics major?***

There's really something for everyone in linguistics. Even if you aren't into social sciences and sociophonetics, there are so many options from phonology to semantics and pragmatics to cognitive bilingualism research. The linguistics department is full of faculty that are just as excited to engage with undergraduates as much as undergraduates want to engage with them, and it's obvious through the ease of building relationships with faculty in the department. I am thankful to the department for creating a fun, low-stress academic environment that feels unparalleled to other departments I've engaged with.

Thank you for your continuing support to the Linguistics Department!

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