

JANUARY NEWSLETTER



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"My heart is in the work..."
- Andrew Carnegie, 1900

**Carnegie
Mellon
University**
Africa



WELCOME REMARKS - RESEARCH CLUB



Dear Tartans of CMU-Africa,

A warm and enthusiastic welcome to 2026! As the newly appointed leadership team of the Research Club, we are thrilled to embark on this year's journey of discovery and innovation with you.

At CMU-Africa, our shared vision is clear: to build a transformative future for the continent through groundbreaking research. You, our brilliant and driven student body, are the very heart of this mission. This year promises a wealth of opportunities - from diving into pioneering faculty projects to forging your own collaborative studies - all designed to turn visionary ideas into tangible impact. We urge you to seize every chance to explore, question, and create.

Building Africa remains our unwavering goal. Research continues to be our most powerful way forward.

The Research Club is here to be your dedicated partner and guide. This year, we are committed to:

- **Fostering Connections:** Bridging students with faculty mentors and peer collaborators to spark powerful research partnerships.
- **Amplifying Work:** Launching new initiatives to showcase the extraordinary projects and breakthroughs originating from our community.
- **Strengthening Our Culture:** Building a vibrant, supportive ecosystem that champions student-led inquiry and celebrates publication.

We know research is a demanding pursuit, but its rewards—the skills, knowledge, and solutions you develop—will define your career and contribute to our world long after your time here. We invite you to get involved, share your voice, and help us shape an exceptional year of research at CMU-Africa.

Here's to a fantastic and productive semester. We cannot wait to achieve great things together.

— The 2026 Research Club Leadership Team

Join our WhatsApp group [here](#)

Follow us on LinkedIn [here](#)

MEET THE NEW LEADERSHIP

As we ended the year 2025, we elected new leaders to guide our next chapter. Please join us in welcoming and supporting them as we move forward together with renewed energy and purpose



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PATHWAYS INTO RESEARCH ONBOARDING EVENT



Ask the **RIGHT** Questions

We successfully began this year's activities with the "Pathways Into Research" onboarding event on Thursday, 29th January 2026. Held in Room A203, the session featured insights from Prof. Tim Brown and Prof. Nathan Williams, who provided invaluable guidance to students embarking on their research journeys. The speakers dismantled the research process into key actionable lessons by sharing their experiences and giving practical and relatable insights.

As we learnt, to thrive in research, developing both independence in project management and critical soft skills like communication is paramount.

The professors emphasized that research is a non-linear endeavor requiring resilience, deep engagement with literature, the ability to structure complex problems and most importantly learning to ask the **RIGHT** questions.

As Professors noted, a defining trait of a researcher is the interest in discovering. The club invites all students to leverage this foundational knowledge and its resources as they explore their own pathways into research.



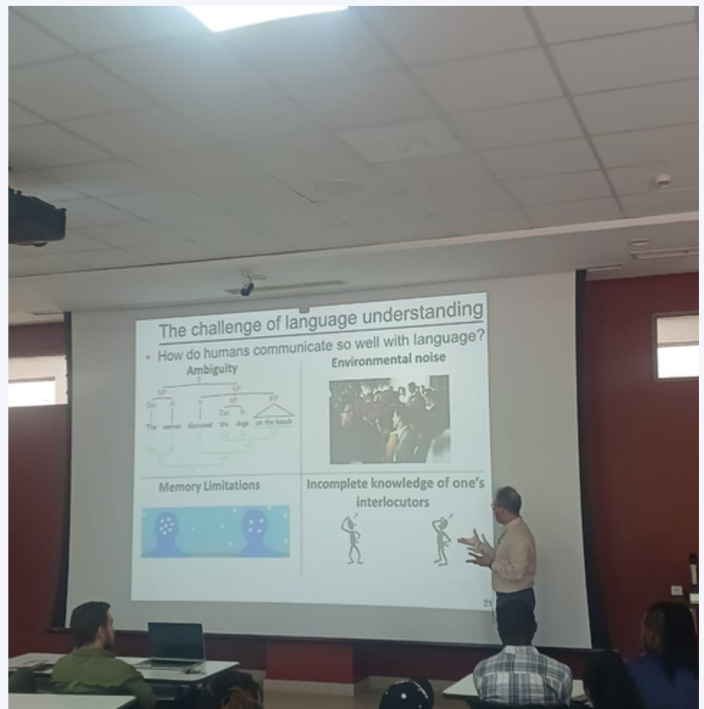


GUEST LECTURE

Natural Language in the Human Mind and in Artificial Systems

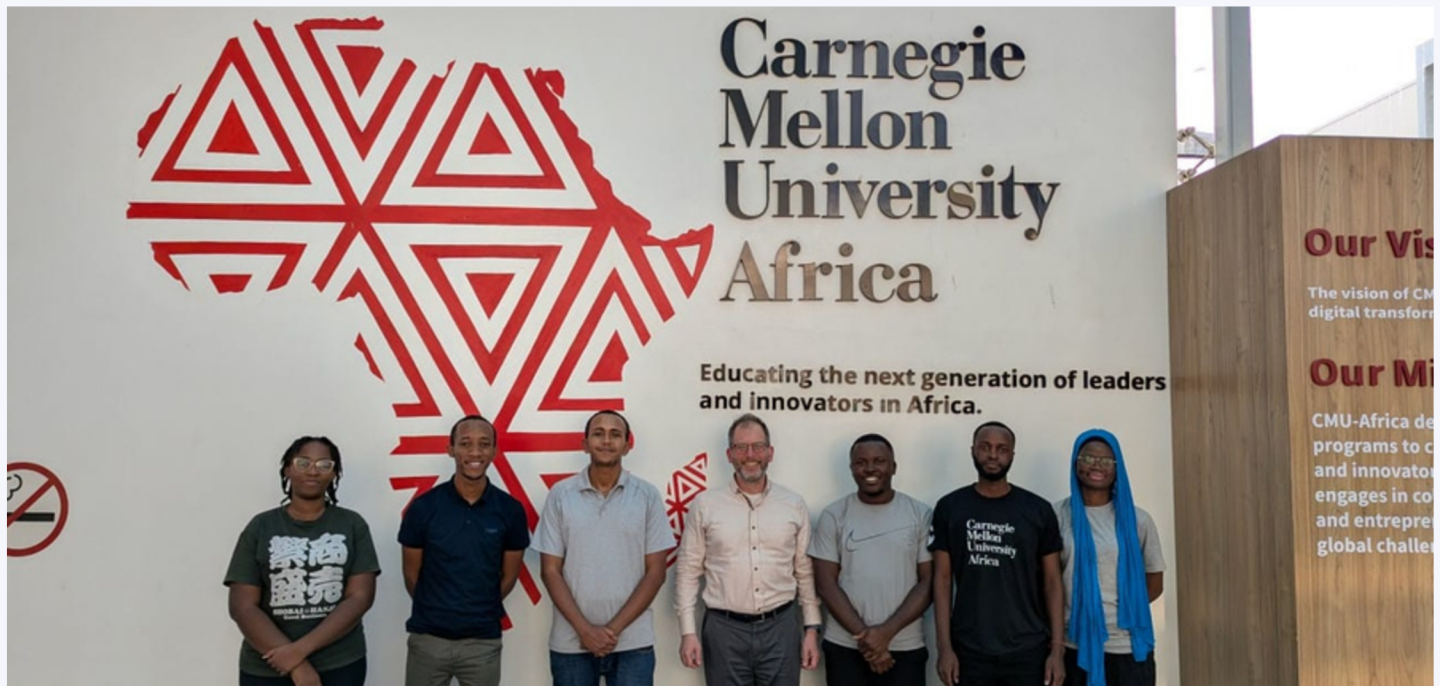
By Prof. Roger Levy

During his visit to CMU Africa Professor Roger Levy gave a lecture on “Natural Language in the Human Mind and in Artificial Systems,” exploring how language is processed and represented in humans and how this compares to the way large language models (LLMs) generate and interpret text. Drawing connections between neuroscience, linguistics, and machine learning, he examined how humans use context, prediction, and prior knowledge to understand language in real time. He highlighted that while human language comprehension is deeply rooted in cognitive and neural mechanisms, modern AI systems rely on statistical patterns learned from vast amounts of data to produce remarkably coherent responses.



The talk emphasized both the similarities and differences between human and artificial language systems. Although LLMs can mimic many aspects of human language use, they do not possess understanding in the same biological or experiential sense as humans. Instead, they operate through probabilistic modeling of linguistic patterns. By comparing insights from neuroscience and linguistics with advances in machine learning, Professor Levy illustrated how studying artificial systems can shed light on human cognition - and vice versa - opening interdisciplinary pathways for deeper understanding of language in both natural and artificial minds.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH PROFESSOR ROGER LEVY



The Research Club was able to have a one-on-one discussion with Professor Roger Levy regarding all things research. In the conversation, Prof. Levy emphasized that strong research begins with asking the right questions. He highlighted that coursework serves as essential groundwork, equipping students with the tools needed to tackle meaningful problems. Researchers should also continually reflect on why they are asking a particular question and why it matters, aiming for work that has real impact, such as high-quality journal publications. He encouraged members to make their research their own by ensuring it reflects their unique voice and contribution, while remaining open to experimentation and new ideas. Although tools like large language models can streamline parts of the process, he stressed that they should enhance efficiency - not replace critical thinking.

The conversation also explored the mindset required for pursuing a PhD. Professor Roger underscored the importance of clarity of purpose, urging students to understand why they want to embark on doctoral studies. He encouraged giving oneself the freedom to explore research before making long-term commitments, noting that best practices emerge from consistently asking meaningful questions. Finally, he reminded members to stay connected to the broader scientific landscape, ensuring their work contributes to and aligns with the larger research community.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

1, Interspeech 2026

Theme: "Speaking Together", Bridging human communication and speech tech.

- Description: The primary global event for speech science and signal processing. New for 2026 is the "Long Paper" track for high-impact, substantial advances.
- Location: Sydney, Australia
- Deadline: February 25, 2026 (AoE)

Key Deadlines:

- Submission Deadline: February 25, 2026 (AoE).
- Paper Update Deadline: March 4, 2026.
- Event Date: September 27 – October 1, 2026.
- Application Link: interspeech2026.org/submission

2. UAI 2026 (Conference on Uncertainty in Artificial Intelligence)

Field: Statistical Machine Learning, Probabilistic Graphical Models, and Causal Inference.

Description: UAI is the premier home for research on systems that reason under uncertainty. It's highly theoretical and mathematically rigorous, perfect for students focusing on the "core" math of AI.

- Location: Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- Deadline: February 26, 2026 (AoE).
- Event Date: August 17 - August 21, 2026.
- Application Link: auai.org/uai2026

3. ECCV 2026 (European Conference on Computer Vision)

Field: Computer Vision, Pattern Recognition, and Deep Learning for Vision.

Description: One of the "Big Three" vision conferences globally. It is extremely competitive (approx. 25% acceptance rate) and critical for careers in autonomous driving, medical imaging, and AR/VR.

- Location: Malmö, Sweden.
- Deadline: February 26, 2026 (11:00 PM CET).

Key Deadlines:

- Abstract Registration: February 26, 2026 (11:00 PM CET).
- Full Paper Submission: March 5, 2026.
- Event Date: September 8 - September 13, 2026.
- Application Link: eccv.ecva.net/OpenReview

Have you followed us on our social Media?

The research club has opened our official pages where you will get information about research, opportunities and very insightful contents. Kindly follow us on our LinkedIn [page](#) by clicking on the icon below and engage our posts.



Feedback for Research Club

Do you have feedback for us?

- As a student researcher, do you want to share your research?
- Do you have any opportunities you want to showcase on this newsletter?
- Ask a Professor - Do you have a question for faculty you want us to feature on the next newsletter?
- Do you have an Alumni, doing amazing works, you want us to feature?
- Any other suggestions

[Scan this QR code or fill the form here](#)

Your feedback is highly appreciated



Enjoy the Semester!

Thank you for reading

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