

Workshop proposal for SLE-57 in Helsinki (August 21-24, 2024)

Psycholinguistic approaches to the study of heritage, Indigenous, and minoritized languages

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Interest in language endangerment has been on the rise gradually from the late 1990s onwards and led to the acknowledgement that linguistics as a field should engage more fully with language diversity, including Indigenous and minoritized languages (Krauss 1992; Seifart et al. 2018; Adamou 2024). Roughly in the same period, there has been growing interest in bilingualism among heritage language speakers and signers using psycholinguistic methods (Rothman 2009; Montrul 2015; Polinsky 2018).

Despite multiple differences in the trajectories of the bilingual individuals, migrant and heritage speakers and signers share several traits with users of Indigenous and minoritized languages (Benmamoun, Montrul & Polinsky 2013; Nagy 2017; Chen Pichler, Lillo-Martin & Palmer 2018; Bellamy & Parafita Couto 2020). Crucially, these populations are often bi/multilingual and use a language that is not dominant in the larger society and that may be endangered in various degrees. And yet, methods and research questions within these research fields are largely kept separate.

Indeed, when researchers studying Indigenous, minoritized, and often endangered languages take into consideration the effects of bilingualism, they focus primarily on contact-induced variation or intergenerational transmission and change in multilingual ecologies (Adamou 2016; Moro 2019; Saad, Klamer & Moro 2019; Grenoble & Osipov 2023; Khachaturyan, Moroz & Mamy Accepted). Application of psycholinguistic protocols in contexts of language endangerment are exceedingly rare (see Adamou 2021).

At the same time, research on bilingualism still strives to reflect cultural and linguistic diversity and move beyond the study of the “Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD)” populations (Blasi et al. 2022). This incompleteness of coverage of the global reality of bilinguals under-determines the power of generalizations from empirical observations as well as their contributions to linguistic and psycholinguistic theories (Lohndal et al. 2019; Scontras & Putnam 2020).

The aim of this workshop is therefore to bring together specialists of heritage languages and linguists studying Indigenous and minoritized languages who use psycholinguistic methods to gain insights into the complex bilingual experience and its effects on these language(s).

In addition to studying offline bilingual behavior and linguistic judgments (Parafita Couto et al. 2016; Bellamy & Wichers Schreur 2022), psycholinguistic studies investigate online processing differences (Puig-Mayenco et al. 2018; Adamou & Shen 2019; Salig et al. 2023). Psycholinguistic studies further explore processing mechanisms at the level of the individual,

such as cross-linguistic priming, which may lead to a change in grammars (Kootstra & Şahin 2018; Adamou, Feltgen & Padure 2021).

Certain methodologies from psycholinguistics can easily be conducted outside the lab, like the fine-grained background bilingual questionnaires (Li et al. 2020). Nonetheless, taking the psycholinguistic approach outside the lab or within small language populations raises several methodological issues. For example, to obtain sufficient statistical power, the number of participants and experimental trials is typically high. But, as Navarro-Torres et al. (2021) note, rich characterization of the sample may be more important than a poorly characterized large sample. Moreover, there is ongoing discussion about the interest of using a monolingual baseline within heritage and minoritized language populations (see Leivada et al. 2023; Rothman et al. 2023). Triangulating study designs with comparison groups can instead help identify the sources of variation, for instance, by comparing the same heritage language in different settings (Osch 2019), or by comparing the heritage speaker generation and the parental generation (Pascual y Cabo 2020). Finally, experimental research with speakers and signers of endangered languages raises specific ethical questions as communities in the process of language reclamation may have different priorities and perspectives (Gaby & Woods 2020).

Given the above, we call for papers addressing any of the following questions:

- To what extent are the experiences of heritage speakers and signers comparable to those of speakers and signers of Indigenous and minoritized languages, and how do these differences shape predictions about comprehension and production mechanisms?
- How do under-described linguistic phenomena contribute to our understanding of bilingual processing mechanisms?
- What novel insights do we gain on language production and comprehension when considering diverse bilingual populations?
- How do psycholinguistic methods help link variation in multilingual experience to (incipient) language change?
- How can psycholinguistic methods inform studies of contact-induced language change?
- How can we reconcile psycholinguistic methods with community-led research and the priorities of language reclamation?
- What are the advantages and limitations of psycholinguistic methods to capture the variety of multilingual exposure and usage in various social contexts?
- What comparison or baseline groups do we need to better understand the sources of variation in multilingual settings involving heritage, Indigenous, and minoritized languages?

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