

# LAMiNATE Talks

**Spring 2022**

LAMiNATE Talks is a seminar series that aims to foster interdisciplinary discussion on language acquisition, multilingualism and language teaching. Talks are held every other Tuesday afternoon 15.15-16.30 CET, with participants not only from Lund but also with a wider audience.

The spring Talks series starts on February 1st and will host 9 events with presentations given both by LAMiNATE members at Lund University and by international colleagues. The talks will continue in the virtual modality. The majority of the talks will be structured into thematic blocks:

Theme 1: Multimodality in Language Development

Theme 2: Language Policy

Theme 3: Language Development in Atypical Population



## February 1 **Theme 1: Multimodality in Language Development**

**Eléonore Arbona** (University of Geneva), **Kilian G. Seeber** (University of Geneva) & **Marianne Gullberg** (Lund University)

*Speakers' co-speech gestures do not facilitate simultaneous interpreters' language comprehension in noise*

Simultaneous interpreting (SI) involves concurrent comprehension and production in two distinct languages. Manual co-speech gestures can facilitate language comprehension, especially when a verbal message is difficult to understand, but do they influence language comprehension in simultaneous interpreters, and if so, is this influence modulated by simultaneous interpreting and/or by interpreting experience? In a picture-matching task, 24 professional interpreters and 24 professional translators were exposed to utterances in their L2 accompanied by semantically matching representational gestures, semantically unrelated pragmatic gestures, or no gestures while viewing passively (interpreters and translators) or during SI (interpreters only). Tasks were carried out at two noise levels (no noise vs. noise). During passive viewing, both groups were significantly more accurate in the target gesture than the no-gesture condition, and significantly faster in the target gesture condition than in the no-gesture and control gesture conditions. However, in the interpreter group, there was no effect of gesture condition on accuracy or reaction times during SI vs. passive viewing/listening. During passive viewing, both groups showed significantly longer visual dwell time on gestures in the target gesture than in the control gesture condition, and we found the same effect in the interpreters during SI. During passive viewing, both groups also looked less at (all) speaker's gestures in the noisy condition, which was also found in interpreters during SI. Moreover, interpreters paid less overt visual attention to gestures during SI than during passive viewing/listening. Overall, during passive viewing, semantically related co-speech gestures facilitated processing and attracted more overt visual attention than semantically unrelated gestures, and this was not modulated by interpreting experience. However, during SI, co-speech gestures affected participants' visual behaviour but not performance. The data therefore suggests that speakers' co-speech gestures do not facilitate simultaneous interpreters' comprehension in noise during SI. It may be that the language comprehension component in SI is affected by interpreters' concurrent production.

February 15 **Theme 1: Multimodality in Language Development**

**Sotaro Kita & Susanne Aussems** (University of Warwick)

*What do iconic gestures communicate to children?*

When we speak, we often spontaneously produce hand gestures that depict actions, motions, and shapes. Such depicting gestures are called iconic gestures. In this presentation, we will explore how such gestures work together with speech and convey information to 3-to-5-year-old children, the age range in which children become increasingly good at integrating information from speech and gesture. Through experiments on how seeing iconic gestures facilitates word learning and event memory, we will show that iconic gestures do more than just convey the referent to children. First, iconic gestures can direct children's attention to the important part of a scene. Second, iconic gestures can help children gain the general (abstract) knowledge that verbs tend to refer to actions. Thus, iconic gestures bring a broad range of beneficial effects to children in communicative and learning situations.

March 1

**Elisabeth Friis & Karin Nykvist** (Lund University)

*Multilingual strategies in contemporary Nordic literature*

In the wake of globalism and new paths of migration on the one hand, and regionalism and new nationalist movements on the other, the world may seem a heavily polarized place. How is this development processed and negotiated in contemporary Nordic poetry and prose? In our presentation we discuss a few of the methodological and theoretical questions that have arisen from our research program, funded by the Swedish Research Council. There, we study how 21st century authors related to the Nordic region, through language and/or habitat, use multilingual devices in order to examine and negotiate the gap between a homogeneous and monolingual ideal historically related to the idea of the nation state and the heterogeneous, multilingual reality of the 21st century. For example, we reflect on how multilingual strategies in contemporary Nordic literary texts highlight as well as destabilize ideas of lingual and cultural purity. We also address topics such as how the ideology of the mother tongue is explored by contemporary Nordic writers, and investigate how dialects and anglicization are put into play, as well as how multilingualism is used as a performative device that negotiates and moulds traces of migration and destabilizes the idea of monolingualism. Our point of departure will be a few emblematic literary examples that illustrate the diversity of multilingual Nordic literature.

March 29 **Theme 2: Language Policy**

**François Grin** (University of Geneva)

*The MIME project: A brief look back, and the questions ahead*

MIME stands for “Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe”. It was a large-scale research project (2014-2018) funded by the European Commission, which brought together 25 teams from 16 countries across the continent, representing 12 different specialties or disciplines.

In the first part of the talk, I recall several aspects of MIME’s emergence and recall the main features of the analytical framework around which the project was organized, before providing a brief overview of the project’s main results, in particular the (free) *MIME Vademecum* (2018) and the recently published volume *Advances in Interdisciplinary Language Policy* (John Benjamins, 2022).

In the second part of the talk, I turn to the future to address the political implications of some of the project’s findings, in particular some that may be useful when pondering the challenges that lie ahead for Europe as a political project, in a politically and geopolitically difficult environment.

In the third and last part of the talk, I focus on research-related implications, highlighting some priorities for the future – not so much in terms of *topics* (since the list could be practically endless) as in terms of research principles and methods, linking up the issues at hand with contemporary epistemological debates.

April 12

**Olga Kepinska** (University of Vienna)

*Effects of typological linguistic diversity on L1 lexical knowledge and processing in kindergartners: behavioral and neural signatures*

The study aims at establishing whether relative differences and similarities between languages multilingual children are exposed to contribute to the development of their cognition and brain. In particular, our goal was to investigate the effects of typological linguistic diversity on first language (L1) lexical knowledge and processing in kindergartners and establish its behavioral and neural signatures.

We analyzed 162 data points collected from 5-6-year-old kindergartners with various language backgrounds on a monolingual-to-multilingual continuum. Detailed parental questionnaires and in-person interviews were used to calculate the length of cumulative exposure to any language each child in the sample came into contact with. We then gathered information on the relative linguistic distances between each child's languages, based on languages' lexicons. Two behavioral outcome variables were used in the study: (1) receptive and (2) expressive L1, English vocabulary; the neuroimaging data consisted of fMRI sequences collected during an English Auditory Word-Form Match Task.

To deal with variable language backgrounds of our participants, we leveraged computational tools from information technology—Shannon's (1948) entropy, and the study of ecological diversity—Rao's (1982) quadratic entropy index of diversity, thus offering a novel, multi-dimensional quantification of language exposure in multilinguals.

Our results show that typological linguistic diversity can be related to expressive but not receptive L1 vocabulary scores. On neural level, it relates to brain activation patterns (among others) in the PGa area in the bilateral IPL, a brain region that previous studies repeatedly associated with multilingual experience, but never with typological linguistic diversity.

With this study, we propose an ecologically valid way of describing the continuum of multilingual language experience, an approach rarely followed but highly called for in the multilingual literature. We furthermore provide evidence for both the cognition and the brain of multilingual kindergartners to be related to the typological linguistic diversity of their environment.

References:

Rao, R. (1982) 'Diversity and Dissimilarity Coefficients: A Unified Approach', *Theoretical population biology*, 21(1), pp. 24–43. doi: 10.13140/RG.2.1.3901.9924.

Shannon, C. E. (1948) 'A mathematical theory of communication', *The Bell System Technical Journal*. doi: 10.1145/584091.584093.

April 26 **Theme 2: Language Policy**

**Tomasso Milani** (Gothenburg University)

*Citizenship as status, habitus and acts: Language requirements and civic orientation in Sweden*

In this presentation, I draw upon Engin Isin's (2008) notions of citizenship as status, habitus and acts as a framework through which to capture how sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower (Foucault 1978) intersect in the context of Sweden's current management of migration. Through an analysis of policy and media debates, I will first illustrate how citizenship as status and sovereign power in Sweden have undergone a shift from actively endorsing multilingualism and cultural dialogue to requiring migrants to demonstrate knowledge of a particular language, Swedish, and what is constructed as a singular national culture and its values. I will then home in on a particular Arabic-language course in civic orientation for newly arrived adult migrants in a large urban area. With the help of ethnographic techniques, I will illustrate how disciplinary power and biopower work by socializing a group of migrants into a specific habitus of Swedish values and norms. I will also unveil the acts of resistance they perform in response.

May 5 **Theme 3: Language Development in Atypical Population**

**Julia L. Evans** (University of Texas)

*Poles, Bowls and Dinosaur Bones: How comprehension differs for children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)*

Rumelhart (1979) proposed that comprehension, like perception, should be likened to Hebb's (1949) paleontologist, who uses his or her beliefs and knowledge about dinosaurs in conjunction with the clues provided by the available bone fragments to construct a full-fledged model of the original. In this talk I will explore how deficits in implicit learning and memory result in an atypical dynamic between dinosaurs (e.g., real world conceptual knowledge) and bone fragments (e.g., linguistic knowledge) in comprehension for children with DLD.

May 24 **Theme 3: Language Development in Atypical Population**

**Ida Rosqvist** (Lund University), **Ketty Andersson** (Lund University), **Olof Sandgren** (Lund University), **Viveka Lyberg-Åhlander** (Lund University, Åbo Akademi University), **Kristina Hansson** (Lund University), & **Birgitta Sahlén** (Lund University)

*Verbal fluency and word definitions in elementary school children. The effect of summer vacation, schooling, bilingualism, cognitive factors, and social factors.*

Vocabulary skills are, on the one hand, important for school success, and, on the other, further developed by formal instruction and schooling. Other factors such as bilingualism and socioeconomic factors have also been shown to influence vocabulary skills.

In this talk I will report on three studies investigating factors influencing the performance on a Semantic Verbal Fluency (SVF) task and a Word Definition (WD) task in first and second grade children attending Swedish mainstream education.

In one study 68 children with mean age 7.9 (ranging from 6.5 to 9.1), were assessed pre- and post-summer vacation and post-fall semester using two SVF categories (Animals and Clothes). The number of words produced in both categories gave the total score. We investigated the development during summer vacation versus formal schooling and whether this development was affected by level of parental education, general language ability, non-verbal IQ, or bilingualism.

In a second study we investigated 208 (mean age 7:8, range 6:8–9:0) monolingual and bilingual children's performance on a WD task where they were assessed with a 10-item WD task. Amount of information included in the definitions gave the WD score and number of words with at least partially correct information gave a Word knowledge score. We investigated how bilingualism, level of parental education, school characteristics (proportion of students with Swedish as second language and proportion of parents with tertiary education), CELF-4 Core Language Score, and non-verbal IQ contributed to their performance.

Finally, I will also report preliminary results from a study on the effect of a teacher-training program on children's SVF and WD performance. In this study, twenty-five teachers working with first and second grade students participated in an 11-week Speech-Language Pathologist-led program focusing on enhancing classroom communication.