

The Center for Multilingual & Intercultural Communication

The MIC Distinguished Lecture Series

Learning from Heritage Languages

Friday, November 21, 2014, 10:00 am

SBS Bldg. Room S147 (MIC Conference Room)

Now that we have learned a fair amount about heritage languages, time has come for linguists to learn from them about the overall design of natural language. Both linguistic theorizing and experimental studies of language development rest heavily on the notion of the adult, perhaps linguistically stable, native speaker. Native speaker competence and use are typically the result of normal first language acquisition in a predominant monolingual environment, with optimal and continuous exposure to the language. In this talk, I present an overview of heritage speakers' linguistic system and discuss several competing factors that shape this system in adulthood. The examination of the linguistic knowledge of heritage speakers allows us to question long-held ideas about the stability of language before the so called critical period for language development, and the nature of the linguistic system developing under reduced input conditions.



Maria Polinsky

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Maria Polinsky is Professor of Linguistics and Director of the Language Science Laboratory at Harvard University. She has expertise in theoretical syntax, where her work spans Austronesian languages, languages of the Caucasus, and a number of other lesser studied languages. She has done extensive fieldwork, and has worked on bringing the research questions of lab-based psycholinguistics to the domain of understudied languages. She also has a long-standing interest in research on Heritage Languages, and she directs annual Heritage Language Institutes organized by the National Heritage Language Research Center at UCLA.

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The Center for Multilingual & Intercultural Communication (MIC) is an interdisciplinary research center where applied linguists, linguists, psychologists, communication scholars, education specialists and scholars of allied disciplines explore multilingual repertoires as rich resources in the context of global mobility and technological advancement.

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