

Department of Linguistics Conference Booklet

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Natalie Skinner

Dr. Natalie Skinner is a speech pathologist and lecturer in speech pathology at the Australian Catholic University. Her clinical practice focuses on supporting communication across the lifespan in community settings. Her current research and teaching interests include cultural and linguistic diversity, family and school interactions, and children with complex communication needs.

PhD Plenary: Amin Pouresmaeil

Amin Pouresmaeil holds a PhD in Linguistics. His PhD project was on instructed second language acquisition with a particular focus on input processing and processing instruction. His main research areas include second language acquisition, input processing, and individual differences in instructed second language acquisition.



Title:

The online effects of processing instruction and structured input on the acquisition of the English passive constructions: The role of input modality in testing

Abstract:

This research examined both the short-term and long-term effects of processing instruction (PI) and its main element, structured input (SI), on learners' acquisition of English passive forms. A total of seventy ESL learners participated in the study and were randomly divided into three groups: a PI group ($n = 24$), an SI group ($n = 25$), and a control group ($n = 21$). Participants in the PI and SI groups completed one hour of computer-based instructional activities, whereas the control group received no instructional treatment. Learners' performance was evaluated using self-paced reading (SPR) and self-paced listening (SPL) tasks, which assessed response accuracy, picture selection response time, and reading and listening time at three points: before instruction, immediately after instruction, and after a delay. Findings showed that both the PI and SI groups achieved significant gains in accuracy on the SPR and SPL tasks at the immediate and delayed posttests, while no improvement was observed in the control group. However, none of the groups demonstrated significant improvement in response time or reading time on the SPR task. In contrast, results from the SPL task indicated that the PI group showed significant reductions in both response time and listening time at both posttests, whereas the SI group showed improvement in response time only at the immediate posttest. Despite these differences, no statistically significant differences were found between the PI and SI groups overall.

PhD Plenary: Brynn Quick

Brynn Quick is a 3rd-year PhD candidate at Macquarie University researching language barriers and language service provision for people with limited English proficiency in Australian healthcare. She holds a Master of Applied Linguistics and a Master of Research, also from Macquarie University, and has research interests spanning applied sociolinguistics, linguistic diversity, and the history of English. Brynn is also a co-editor and frequent host of the Language on the Move Podcast, where she contributes to making sociolinguistic research accessible to diverse audiences.



Title:

“We just use the family members”: Medical receptionists’ perceptions of professional vs. ad hoc interpreters

Abstract:

In Australia, approximately 3.6% of the population has limited English proficiency (LEP). When people with LEP need to access English-based Australian healthcare services, policies state that professional interpreters must be used to facilitate communication between these patients and healthcare providers. However, responsibility for assessing English proficiency and arranging interpreter services is often unspecified. Consequently, these decisions frequently fall to medical receptionists, who are typically the patient's first point of contact. Therefore, in this study we examine how receptionists make decisions around and facilitate a pathway for language access for these LEP patients, particularly regarding interpreter use, both at the reception desk and throughout a patient's entire medical pathway with healthcare providers. This is done through individual semi-structured interviews with 15 receptionists over three healthcare sites, with data analysis drawing on Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy. Findings reveal receptionists' strong preference for patients' interpreting family members over professional interpreters. Receptionists favour these family members because they perceive them as fulfilling dual roles as both interpreters and carers, thus prioritising patients' perceived comfort and continuity of care. Receptionists also report limited knowledge of language policies and the role of professional interpreters, describing such knowledge as a "luxury" they lack time to acquire, particularly given their self-perception as "low-level" and "non-essential" administrative staff. This study demonstrates that medical receptionists play a critical yet heretofore underexamined role in shaping LEP patients' access to language services throughout their healthcare journey. By foregrounding receptionists as street-level bureaucrats, this research extends understanding of how language access policies are enacted in practice and identifies an important target for interventions aimed at reducing LEP patients' inequities in healthcare.

PhD Plenary: Tazin Abdullah

Tazin Abdullah is in the final year of her PhD at the Department of Linguistics, researching how users of languages other than English access domestic violence information in Australia. Holding a Master of Applied Linguistics and a Master of Research from Macquarie University, her research interests span linguistic diversity, linguistic landscape, pragmatics, and plurilingual pedagogies. She is also a blog writer and podcast host for Language on the Move.

**Title:**

Domestic violence support in linguistically diverse societies: barriers to accessing information

Abstract:

In Australia, women experience domestic violence (DV) at alarming rates, with those from language other than English (LOTE) backgrounds facing specific vulnerabilities in relation to their social circumstances and language needs. Factors such as financial and visa dependency combined with low English proficiency in an English-dominated society limit their access to support information. Despite increasing availability of multilingual information owing to automated translation tools, the real-world obstacles to meaningful access are inadequately understood.

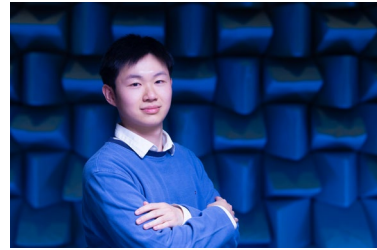
Against this background, this paper investigates institutional multilingual DV information using the 4-A standard (availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability) of language support for linguistically diverse communities. The 4-A standard is used to analyze data from three sources: institutional websites that provide DV information, participants' survey results from online searches for multilingual DV information, and 20 in-depth interviews with DV case workers.

Findings indicate that many organizations make information available online in a large number of LOTE languages using automated translation tools. However, accessibility is restricted due to factors that relate to specific social and language needs of LOTE women. Amongst these are complex website features that do not take into consideration both linguistic and non-linguistic constraints of LOTE women in DV situations. Acceptability of translated information may be limited in relation to accuracy and lack of socio-cultural context. LOTE women are often dependent upon case workers to broker DV information found online and, therefore, adaptability is dependent on case worker knowledge of diverse contexts and specific situations of LOTE women.

These findings highlight the engagement of diverse data sources in revealing real-world language barriers that have considerable implications for the most vulnerable in society. This investigation contributes to understanding multilingual service provision in a linguistically diverse society and can aid in the design of more inclusive communication of vital support information.

MRes Plenary: Shunhao Yang & Eva Duffin

Shunhao Yang is a final-year Master of Clinical Audiology student at Macquarie University, interested in developing culturally and linguistically responsive audiological services that can be readily delivered by clinicians across Australia. His thesis focuses on evaluating the clinical effectiveness of a newly developed Mandarin Auditory Speech Perception Test, including its ability to assess speech perception outcomes with hearing aid amplification.



Eva Duffin is a final-year Master of Clinical Audiology student at Macquarie University, with an interest in advancing culturally responsive and linguistically accessible audiological services for Australia's diverse communities. Her thesis focuses on evaluating a newly developed Mandarin Auditory Speech Perception Test and exploring whether incorporating reaction time measures alongside accuracy scores can provide additional insights into speech perception in Mandarin-speaking older adults with hearing loss.

Title:

Evaluating Mandarin Auditory Speech Perception Test in Older Mandarin-Speakers in Australia: Associations with Hearing Thresholds, Hearing Aid Amplification, and Reaction Time

Abstract:

Purpose: Multilingual hearing loss patients with low English proficiency are facing significant language barriers when accessing audiological assessments in Australia, particularly in speech audiometry, where commonly used test materials have predominantly been developed and standardised for English-speaking populations only. To address this long-standing clinical gap and support more culturally and linguistically responsive hearing care, our study aims to evaluate the clinical effectiveness of a newly developed Mandarin auditory speech perception test for older Mandarin-speaking adults in Australia and its suitability for evaluating the effectiveness of hearing aid amplification and reaction time on test performance.

Method: 43 older Mandarin-speaking adults residing in Australia with self-reporting limited English proficiency were tested using an iPad, with speech stimuli presented in the sound field through two external speakers at three randomly presented intensity levels (25, 45, and 65 dB SPL) on lexical tone, consonant and vowel. Each target word was paired with a minimal pair competitor, and participants were instructed to select the word they heard. Participants who

used hearing aids were tested with and without aided hearing. All participants received a hearing assessment.

Results: Data collection has been completed, and statistical analysis is ongoing. Based on previous research, we expect that speech perception scores will be associated with pure-tone hearing thresholds. We further hypothesise that performance with hearing aid amplification will be better than without, and reaction time will be faster with increased audibility. Performance might also vary across sound presentation levels and hearing levels.

Conclusions: Our findings will inform the development of a clinically useful speech assessment tool for cross-checking audiometric results and evaluating hearing aid rehabilitative outcomes in multilingual communities.

PhD Plenary: Jacqueline Collins

Jacqueline Collins is a PhD candidate in Speech Pathology at Macquarie University, supervised by Associate Professor Rachael Unicomb. Her research explores cross-domain impacts in children with co-occurring stuttering and speech sound disorders, with the aim of strengthening the evidence base for clinical practice. Jacqueline holds a Bachelor of Applied Science (Speech Pathology) from the University of Sydney and has published in the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology. She also works in private practice on the Central Coast of New South Wales.



Title:

Understanding cross-domain effects in children with co-occurring stuttering and speech sound disorders.

Abstract:

This presentation outlines a PhD program of research exploring treatment of children with co-occurring stuttering and speech sound disorders. Specifically, the research will explore whether treatment in one disorder has led to changes in the other, non-treated disorder, known as cross-domain effects.

The first study was a scoping review that examined the available evidence on the treatment of co-occurring stuttering and speech sound disorders. To identify all available information, the review included both traditional sources (such as database searches) and non-traditional sources

(including websites and social media searches). The review found limited empirical evidence, with only six published studies identified. Most clinical guidance was based on expert opinion rather than research evidence. The review highlighted evidence gaps and the need for further research to inform clinical practice.

One theme that emerged from the review was around anecdotal report of cross-domain effects during treatment, which may impact clinical decision-making. To further investigate this phenomenon, two additional studies are proposed.

First, a qualitative study will explore speech pathologists' experiences of cross-domain effects when working with children with co-occurring stuttering and speech sound disorders. Semi-structured interviews analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) will gather rich and nuanced insights about how speech pathologists experience, understand and manage any perceived cross-domain effects during intervention.

The second proposed study is a crossover intervention study. The study is designed to investigate whether direct treatment of one communication domain will have an impact on the other domain. This study aims to provide empirical evidence regarding the presence and nature of cross-domain effects in children with co-occurring stuttering and speech sound disorder.

Together, these studies aim to advance understanding about cross-domain effects and generate evidence to support speech-pathologists clinical-decision when working with this population.

MRes Plenary: Yi Dong

Yi Dong is a newly enrolled PhD student in Translation and Interpreting Studies in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University. She completed her Master of Research in June 2026, with a project examining individual differences in the reception of translated literary texts. Her research interests include translation reception and empirical approaches to translation studies.

**Title:**

The Impact of Foreignising and Domesticating Translation Strategies on Character Construction and Reception: Responses by Australian Readers to English Translations of a Chinese Short Story

Abstract:

Foreignization and domestication are commonly conceptualized as opposing strategies for translating culture-specific items in literary texts. While recent cognitive and empirical translation reception studies examined readers' responses to these approaches, existing research rarely accounts for individual differences in reader disposition, nor has it extended beyond isolated lexical or syntactic translation manipulation. This study investigates how translation strategy and readers' trait transportability, the tendency to be absorbed in narratives, interact in shaping readers' cognitive and affective responses to character-related textual features. Drawing on psychonarratology, two English versions of a Chinese short story were created by manipulating characterization cues to reflect either a foreignized or domesticated style. Australian participants (N = 42) were randomly assigned to the two conditions and completed ratings of three psychological constructs: perspective taking, emotional engagement, and narrative transportation, alongside trait transportability. Results indicate that trait transportability strongly predicts all three constructs, whereas translation strategy exerts limited main effects. Lower-transportability readers report slightly higher scores on all measures in the foreignized condition. Both groups identified similar numbers of foreign elements and demonstrated comparable cultural understanding. These findings suggest that extensive domestication may produce estranging effects perceptually akin to foreignization, and that foreignization does not necessarily hinder cultural comprehension. Overall, the results underscore the role of reader-level cognitive traits and indicate that translation effects are contingent rather than uniform.

MRes Plenary: Darby Durbin

Darby Durbin is an MRes student in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University. Before moving to Sydney for her program this January, she worked as the Lab Manager of the Functional Hearing Lab at Boys Town National Research Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska, under the direction of Dr. Ellen Peng. In the Functional Hearing (FUN) Lab, Darby led the daily operations of a human-participant research lab studying spatial and functional hearing development in pediatric cochlear implant users. Darby graduated from Creighton University in 2024 with a B.S. in Neuroscience. Her research interests bridge neuroscience and audiology, where she aims to help uncover how the brain responds to difficult listening situations.

**Title:**

Quantifying the Perceptual Benefits of Spatial Release from Masking on Stream Segregation Using Electroencephalography

Abstract:

Background: A listener's ability to understand one speaker amid competing talkers improves substantially with access to binaural spatial cues, particularly interaural time and level differences (ITDs and ILDs). Spatial cues are known to provide spatial release from masking (SRM) and behavioral intelligibility benefits to normal hearing (NH) listeners. However, the way SRM manifests in the brain during continuous speech remains unclear. Neural speech tracking measured using electroencephalography (EEG) is an effective way to assess how neural activity follows the speech envelope, but its sensitivity to binaural spatial cues requires further investigation.

Methods: Twenty-five normal-hearing adults (aged 18 to 35 years) participated in this study. Participants completed the adaptive Australian Sentence Test in Noise (AuSTIN) to measure speech reception thresholds at 50% correct. The Target remained centrally located while the perceived location of eight-talker babble was manipulated using ITD cues or ILD cues: co-located, ITD Left (-600 μ S), ITD Right (+600 μ S), ILD Left (-5 dB), and ILD Right (+5 dB). Differences in SRT between co-located and spatially separated conditions were used to quantify behavioral SRM. During the EEG recording, participants selectively attended to passages from a children's audiobook presented under the same five conditions plus Quiet. Participants answered a series of comprehension questions following each passage and rated listening effort and attentional difficulty. Neural speech tracking was quantified as the correlation between the reconstructed envelope and the actual speech envelope using temporal response function (TRF) analyses.

Results: Access to ITD or ILD cues alone provided ~5 dB of behavioral SRM. Comprehension accuracy was significantly poorer in the co-located condition than when spatial cues were available. Neural tracking of the target speech was also significantly weaker when the attended passage and background babble were co-located than when ITD or ILD cues were available. Neural tracking did not significantly correlate with comprehension accuracy, although positive trends emerged when spatial cues were available.

Conclusion: Access to binaural spatial cues improved both behavioral speech comprehension and neural tracking of the continuous target speech in the presence of competing talkers. These findings demonstrate that ITD and ILD facilitate SRM at both behavioral and neural levels.