Research School "Language Contact within Systems and Speakers"

21-23 Feb 2018, University Potsdam

DESCRIPTION

The research school aims to offer a wide forum for exchange on experimental work and hands-on research on current topics from the field of language contact. The event focuses on three intimately related areas, which construct the building blocks of the school both in thematic and organisational terms: 1) Bilingual (multilingual) language acquisition including work of language attrition and heritage languages; 2) Language variation, and 3) Institutional multilingualism. Hereby we adopt an integrated approach to ontogenetic and phylogenetic manifestations of language contact and change, and aim to cover topics ranging from individual and social aspects to structural-typological issues. Topics covered by the research school may include acquisition-oriented aspects of child (and adult) multilingualism such as second language acquisition and bilingual first language acquisition; aspects of code switching; aspects of contact-induced language change such as lexical and structural borrowing (contact languages), as well as societal aspects of multilingualism and language management in society and particularly in educational institutions (language maintenance and language shift), and more.

The research school does not have a fixed theoretical orientation and welcomes contributions from a variety of approaches on methodology to language contact and the mentioned subfields. The main focus is laid on the methodological repertoire that is most commonly associated with the individual fields. We expect participants to come into dialog and concrete exchange on specific methodological issues. In this way the research school will foster exchange of views and methods on dealing with data collection, assessment and analysis within the subfields. In the process of presenting and discussing the respective methodology, we expect participants and experts to be able to learn from each other and each other's methodological experiences by exchanging views and acquiring knowledge of methods of research that my not be common within their own field.

A non-exhaustive overview of exemplary topics that can be assessed empirically and serve as a point of exchange of a methodological know-how is given below:
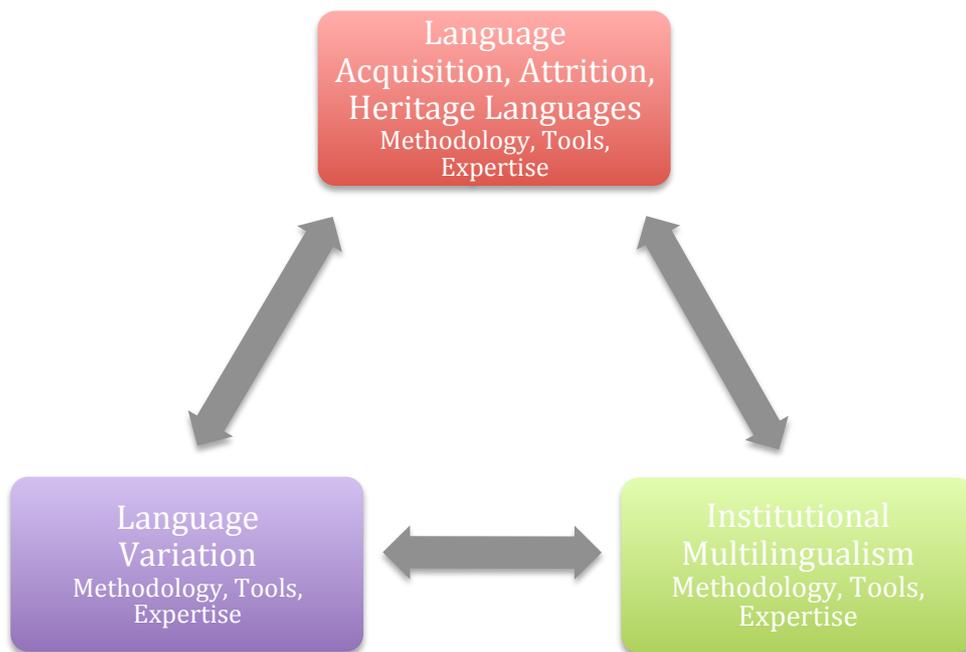
• Methods of analysing language contact in bilinguals

- Ways of investigating unilingual utterances in the search for possible interlanguage effects (in bilingual acquisition)
- Methods of assessing code-switching
- Variable properties: their acquisition and change across generations of speakers (e.g. structural or morphological changes)
- How learners match the probabilistic distribution of linguistic variation, including the potential for changes across lifespan
- Examining language contact and change across the lifespan: from acquisition to attrition or loss – ways of analysing such changes
- Language contact and language change- at the individual level but also within the system; code-switching; interferences
- Methods of fieldwork on language contact
- Methods of assessing the relationship between contact languages
- Methods of data comparison: how to compare results from elicitation and naturalist contexts
- Interpreting sentence comprehension
- Ways of dealing with the disassociation found between results from production and comprehension data
- Accessing and assessing the input. Statistical analysis of adult input and children's production
- Collecting information about input conditions
- Documentation of the sociolinguistic setting in which data are collected

GOAL

Our goal is to cover a wide range of topics within the subject of language contact and yet be precise and specific with regards to the relevance of explicit methodological instruction from experts and a constructive know-how exchange among young researchers. In this way the research school will cover a range of methods associated with research in the individual subfields that, in our view, may be of common relevance to the general field of language contact: from data elicitation and corpus studies to input data analysis and learning studies of miniature languages in a lab.

A primary goal of the research school is to foster interaction and potential collaboration among researchers investigating language from the perspective of the different subfields and using a range of methodologies. A further goal is to provide opportunities for experienced scholars to mentor young scholars, including PhD students and postdocs, working on a range of topics within language variation, encouraging them to work across domains and use a wide set of methodology.

Language Acquisition, Attrition, Heritage Languages
Methodology, Tools, Expertise

Language Variation
Methodology, Tools, Expertise

Institutional Multilingualism
Methodology, Tools, Expertise

REALISATION

- Lecture input (3 keynotes- experts from the three subfields)
- Concrete examples of experimental design and data evaluation (all participants)
- "Hands-on" research
- Personal advisory sessions (coaching-sessions)
- Round table at the end