Heritage Languages and Variation
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Introducing Heritage Languages and Variation

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The grammar of heritage language speakers has attracted extended scholarly interest in the last few decades. While many different cultural and grammatical aspects have been discussed to explain the deviant language trajectory of heritage speakers, the variation found with respect to the different facilitative factors and criteria as well as linguistic phenomena is still investigated. With the current volume, we present studies from diverse and cross-linguistic research, following the *International Conference on Heritage Languages and Variation* (HELV), which was held in Limassol, Cyprus in September 2022. The volume comprises seven chapters, with each one focusing on a different linguistic phenomenon or population, involving the interaction between a heritage language and a dominant language, followed by comparison with monolingual speakers. This collection of different interrelated studies enables the discussion of the most common factors explaining the effects observed and the comparison of methodologies and findings across different languages and contexts.

For years now, research on heritage language speakers focused on the profile of the population (Benmamoun, Montrul, Polinsky 2013; Polinsky 2018; Rothman 2009), the question of incomplete acquisition as an explanation to the deviant grammar observed (Montrul 2016), and the effects of language contact between dominant and heritage languages (Andriani et al. 2022). Most studies have one common factor: the study of heritage languages to study the mechanisms of language development and change in different groups following language contact in heritage contexts. In some contexts, the different forms can vary from the grammar acquired in the early stages

of life, that is, the speaker's first language (L1), and other grammars developed in speakers of later generations whose dominant language for various reasons is different from their home-spoken language L1. The study of this population then must involve a comparison with a respective 'full' language, also known as the "baseline or homeland variety" (Polinsky 2018). The comparison between a heritage and a homeland/baseline speaker aims to inform our understanding of linguistic structures, as well as identify any innovations and emerging phenomena in the heritage grammar. The input received by younger generations can be grammatically divergent from the input received in earlier generations and could also be characterized by disruption in the acquisition process (e.g., Benmamoun, Montrul, Polinsky 2013). Different linguistic abilities may be observable in different scales of multilingualism across different populations, thereby contributing to the "comparative linguality" (Grohmann 2014) of monolingual, bi(dia)lectal, and bi-/multilingual speakers within a gradient spectrum of multilingualism. With specific reference to a deviant grammar of heritage speakers of Russian, Serbian, English as well as the grammar of Greek and Turkish Cypriot monolingual speakers, the following chapters bring together experimental, theoretical and sociolinguistic research.

Chapter 1 investigates morphosyntactic development in HL-Russian populations compared to monolingual Russian children and adults, by examining the variables of monolingual-like language acquisition, divergent attainment, attrition, and the consequences of language contact. Previous research showed gender restructuring in adult HL-Russian speakers in the United States (Polinsky 2008) that differed from HL-Russian children. With a focus on child HL-Russian speakers of different linguistic backgrounds, Meir mentions the factors of transparency, frequency, and regularity (e.g., Rodina, Westergaard 2012; 2017; Mitrofanova et al. 2018), masculine gender as the default on the basis of its frequency and morphological unmarkedness, gender restructuring, and facilitative cross-linguistic influences (Rodina et al. 2020). By focusing on an adjective-noun elicitation task, the author examines gender assignment/agreement in real words in Russian. In the study, 99 participants were recruited, with the monolingual adult and child group from the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, while the HL group of adults and children were recruited in Israel. A picture-based adjective-noun agreement task was administered, including nouns in feminine, masculine and neuter gender. The results showed that the HL-child group has a lower accuracy on transparent feminine, opaque masculine, and opaque feminine conditions. The author discusses the relevance of gender agreement similarity in Russian and Hebrew as a possible explanation for the developmental trajectory observed, as well as exposure variables such as accuracy, proficiency, and the type of input to the

children. The results for HL-Russian child speakers are consistent with monolingual Russian-speaking children language development, indicating that neuter nouns and opaque feminine nouns pose greater challenges and that some HL-Russian speakers restructure gender, either demonstrating a two-way gender system or a system with no grammatical gender, defaulting to masculine.

In Chapter 2, gender is investigated in 9 child heritage speakers of Serbian, with German being the dominant language. Based on previous research (Montrul 2008; Polinsky 2008), heritage gender agreement in Slavic HL show that masculine gender is the default gender and fewer errors are observed in agreeing masculine nouns and that heritage Russian speakers develop two distinct gender systems: a three-gendered system in high proficiency speakers different from the monolingual three-gendered system and a two-gendered system in low proficiency speakers, in which all the neuter nouns are categorized as feminine. Krstic and Stankovic discuss lexical learning and cue-based gender assignment in bilinguals, transparency, amount of exposure in the home and morphophonological characteristics of words as possible facilitative factors in the acquisition of gender based on previous work. With an elicited production task where participants were shown pictures of pairs of objects, animals or people and were asked to complete sentences, the authors tested 6 groups of nouns (three genders, with canonical and non-canonical endings) chosen based on overall highest frequency. The results confirm that speakers rely on morphophonological cues to determine noun gender, and a correlation between proficiency level and error production, while the advanced speakers show agreement patterns similar to the monolingual control group. The overall age was found to have a positive effect with older child bilinguals and monolinguals (7-10) showing a more target-like gender agreement system. Advanced participants developed a three-gender system, while the lowest-ranked subjects exposed a two-gender system (masculine vs. feminine).

Cerqueglini in Chapter 3 explores definiteness as on crosslinguistic semantic variable and more specifically the count/mass distinction with a study testing grammar of definiteness, cognitive individuation, and attention to shape vs. substance in Levantine Arabic heritage speakers of English. The relations between countability through definiteness and conceptual properties such as the individuation of discrete bounded entitites is discussed in the chapter as a crosslinguistic observation with the count/mass distinction associated with shape rather than subsence of entities. Speakers then classify entities based on their shapes (see Du Bois 1980; Gundel, Hedberg, Zacharski 1993; Koga 1992). The methodology of the study involved linguistic and cognitive tests for participants born and raised in England, monolingual native Levantine Arabic speakers and heritage Arabic speakers of English. Grammar tests involved a fill-in-the-blank

task, an error correction task, countability judgments of nouns in isolation, and countability judgments of nouns in context. A semantic similarity test was administered to test whether the count/mass distinction affected the semantic representation of words. Then a Spot-the-Odd-One-Out task asked speakers to make semantic judgments by spotting the odd one out in terms of meaning to check if the count/mass status affects English speakers' semantic representations. The replication of the Match-by-Similarity task (Lucy, Gaskins 2001) had the participants observe an original objects and choose a similar one from two alternative objects based on the shape or the material composition to test if these factors define the linguistic properties of countability. The results of the experiments showed a marked closeness between the Levantine Arabic heritage speakers of English and the Levantine Arabic speakers. The author discusses the domain (dependent on sensory experience) and the language in question and its transmission as possible factors for the speakers. Levantine Arabic heritage speakers of English in an English linguistic environment base their daily routine to Levantine Arabic culture and this influences mass concepts, quantifiers and classifiers. The conclusion for this chapter highlights that the heritage speaker group tested shows that attitudes and judgments are also transmitted on the basis of cultural practices.

In chapter 4, Papastefanou investigates bilingual children's performance in language and word-level reading (i.e., decoding) by drawing comparisons between the heritage and majority languages (Greek-English) and between two age groups in the first four years of primary school. The author also investigates contextual factors (i.e., quality and quantity of language exposure and input) as predictors of language and reading development. The study involved forty children attending Years 1 and 3 of primary school who were then reassessed one year later in Years 2 and 4 in schools in the UK. With a battery of standardized and non-standardized assessments, the children's nonverbal abilities, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and decoding skills in Greek and English were tested accompanied by a parental questionnaire measuring the children's language history. The author tested English phonological awareness by using the blending and elision tasks from the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing-Second Edition (Wagner et al. 2013), as well as adaptations of relevant tools. English Decoding was assessed using The Test of Word Reading Efficiency (Wagner et al. 2013) and Greek Decoding was assessed using the Greek adaption of the TOWRE-2 (Georgiou et al. 2012). The results showed that overall scores were higher in the majority than in the heritage language, showing a relation between contextual factors and the scores in the heritage language. Findings also show a relationship between phonological awareness and decoding skills, supporting the orthographic transparency hypothesis.

On the basis of a theoretical analysis on evaluative morphology, chapter 5, proposes different aspects of evaluative morphology in Modern Greek by focusing on intensification, deintensification, augmentation, and diminution. Giannoula in this chapter argues that adverbial preverbs in Modern Greek have a degree function and are used as evaluative morphemes when categorized into the evaluative classes of boosters, maximizers, diminishers, and maximizing minimizers. Focusing on intensification and deintensification, evaluative affixes in Modern Greek are presented as belonging in two main categories, namely *intensifying preverbs* (*para-* 'over', *kalo-* 'well-', *yper-* 'over-', *kata-* 'completely', *kara-* 'extremely', *skilo-* 'to death', *xilio-* 'deeply', and *mirjo-* 'deeply') and *deintensifying preverbs* (*poly-* 'much', *psilo-* 'a bit', *miso-* 'half-', *koutso-* 'poorly', *psefto-* 'poorly', *xazo-* 'half-heartedly'). Two other dimensions of evaluation, i.e., *augmentation* and *diminution*, are also discussed with respect to Modern Greek evaluative morphemes, like the diminutive *-aki*, that may have either a descriptive, quantitative property, when referring to size, or a qualitative property when referring to speaker's feelings towards a referent. This study contributes with capturing the variation in the evaluative morphology of Modern Greek through a detailed descriptive and theoretical discussion.

In the same realm, chapter 6 discusses the variation in Cypriot Turkish grammar by focusing on young adult Turkish Cypriots. Variation is discussed by Walter as related to the main urban centers of the area and is associated with differing positions along the continuum between Cypriot and Standard Turkish. The methodology applied involved fifteen Turkish Cypriot university students who were shown print-out maps of northern Cyprus and were asked to draw lines on the map showing where Cypriot Turkish would be spoken in a different way. Participants consistently showed that variation exists between each of the main urban areas in northern Cyprus. The author discusses the proximity of Cypriot Turkish to Standard Turkish and the language contact with Greek vocabulary as determining factors for the variation observed. On a sociolinguistic note, variation is also captured along a basilectal-acrolectal continuum between the varieties in contact and the spoken variety. This chapter provides an interesting description of the variation in the Cypriot Turkish grammar and possible sociolinguistic explanations that can explain the variation observed.

Last, in chapter 7 by Rowe, Cypriot Greek is discussed in the context of diglossia, attenuated toward diaglossia characterized by dialect moribundity and further complicated by socio-politically ideological factors, with Standard Greek as the high variety indexing Cypriot Hellenism (vs. Cypriotism, 'true' local Cypriot nationalism) and challenging dialect revitalization and diglossic maintenance. The author discusses the way the Cyprus populations is characterized by

proponents of Cypriotism who usually view Cyprus as a community where being Cypriot infers a cross-border pan-Cyprian unification. Those of Greek-Cypriot nationalism/Cypriot Hellenism maintain an ideological union with Greece and show nostalgia on the basis of a close ethnic connection with it. The author proposed that this "diglossic nostalgia", with the High variety representing the "Greekness" of (Orthodox) Cypriots and that conservative institutions embrace this "diglossic nostalgia" by dividing the High and Low varieties. This chapter, in this sense, offers a different explanation as to the observed sociolinguistic variation between the standard and non-standard varieties used on the island of Cyprus.

In summary, the chapters in this volume provide the reader with a variety of methodological tools in experimental contexts involving heritage and monolingual speakers, detailed description of language variation and theoretical analysis to explain it, as well as sociolinguistic variables and ideas that show the complexity of the various aspects of heritage language development and language variation.

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