The 7th Conference on Corpora for Language and Aging Research (CLARe7)

CONFERENCE BOOKLET

May 13-15, 2026

Organizers: Research Center for Ageing, Language and Care
School of Foreign Studies, Tongji University

WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Conference Attendee,

Welcome to CLARe7, the Seventh Conference on Corpora for Language and Aging Research being held May 13-15, 2026, hosted by Research Center for Ageing, Language and Care and School of Foreign Studies, Tongji University.

The theme of CLARe7, ***Negotiating Age-related Changes***, highlights how language and communication evolve across the lifespan. The conference brings together interdisciplinary perspectives on language and aging, with particular attention to the following themes:

- **Corpus Linguistics and AI-enhanced Approaches to Lifespan Language Change**
  Exploring corpus-based, computational, and AI-assisted approaches to language variation and change across the lifespan.
- **Multimodal and Technology-mediated Communication in Aging**
  Investigating how older adults engage with multimodal resources and digitally mediated communication in everyday life.
- **Cognitive Aging, Psycholinguistics, and Compensatory Strategies**
  Examining the relationship between cognitive aging, language processing, and communicative adaptation.
- **Intergenerational Communication and the Construction of Age**
  Focusing on how age identities and social roles are negotiated through interaction across generations.
- **Pragmatic Adaptation and Discourse Management in Older Adults**
  Addressing discourse, interactional, and pragmatic features of communication in later life.
- **Negotiating Multilingualism in Later Life**
  Exploring multilingual practices, language maintenance, and identity negotiation across the lifespan.

In this booklet, you will find all you need to know about participating in CLARe7. The book is organized according to the schedule so you can follow along, session-by-session. We hope you find the conference enjoyable, productive, and stimulating!

Sincerely,

CLARe7 Scientific Committee

Annette Gerstenberg	GU Yueguo	Michaela Hejná
David Bowie	HUANG Lihe	

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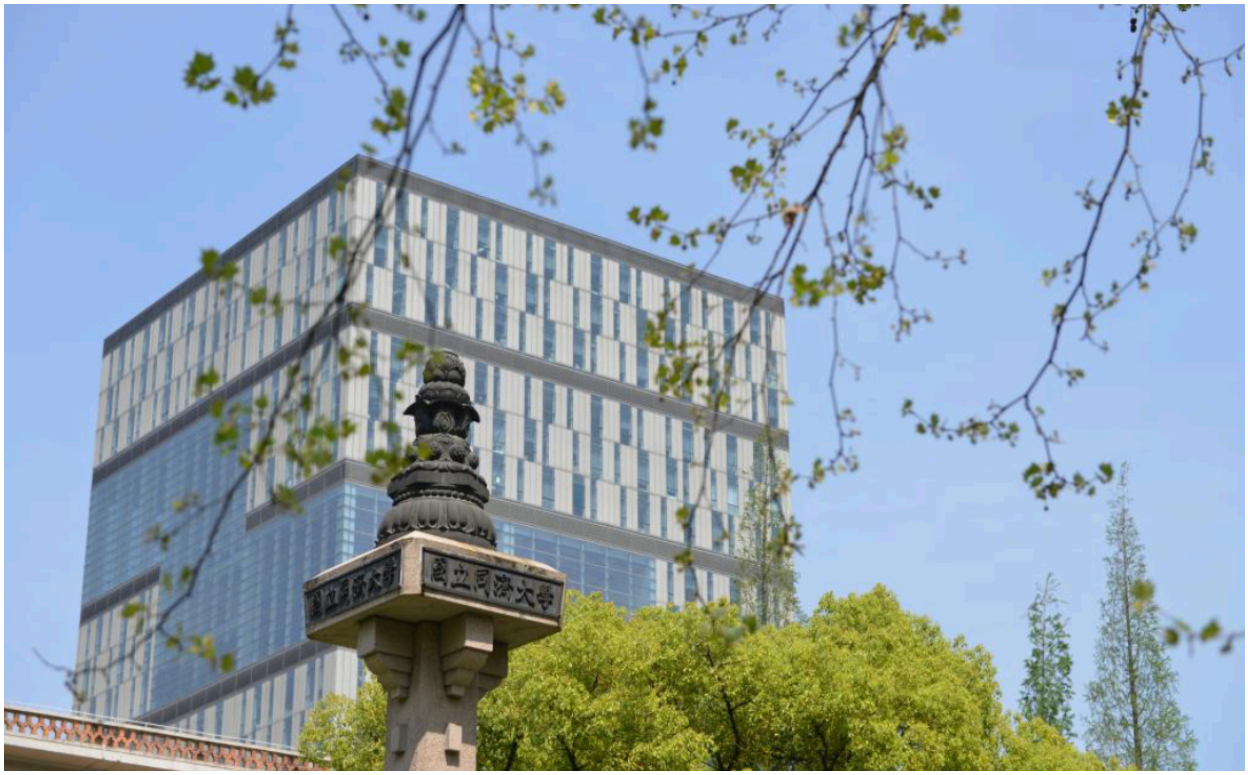
TONGJI UNIVERSITY

Established in 1907, Tongji University is one of the leading universities in China under the direct administration of the Ministry of Education, is listed on Project 985 and Project 211, and is one of the Class A universities in the World-leading University Construction Program of China. With over a century of history, Tongji University has always valued the balanced development of five functions, namely the nurturing of talents, scientific research, community service, cultural inheritance and innovation, and international exchange. These have propelled the University to become a top-ranking university in the country. The University now covers 11 broad categories of academic disciplines, to include: Engineering, Science, Medicine, Management, Economics, Philosophy, Literature, Law, Education, and Fine Arts.

The University offers 73 undergraduate majors. It can grant Master's degrees in 45 broad academic disciplines along with 30 professional Master's programs. It also confers doctoral degrees in 37 broad academic disciplines with 12 professional doctoral programs and 35 postdoctoral mobile research stations. Tongji University houses six State Key Laboratories, one National Engineering Laboratory, one National Major Technology Infrastructure Equipment, one National Collaborative Innovation Center, one National Large-Scale Scientific Instruments Center, six National Engineering (Technology) Research Centers, six national-level research platforms and 117 research platforms at the provincial and ministerial levels. Also, there are 12 hospitals, and 13 middle and primary schools affiliated with the University.



Source: https://en.tongji.edu.cn/p/#/

THE SCHOOL OF FOREIGN STUDIES, TONGJI UNIVERSITY



The School of Foreign Studies of Tongji University originated from the German Language Section of the Tongji German Medical School founded in 1907. Upon development over a century, the school now possesses doctoral and post-doctoral programs in foreign language and literature, forming an education system for students from bachelors to masters to PhDs of academic and professional degrees.

With the fundamental task of cultivating virtue among talents and the philosophy of "shaping values, integrating teaching and research, encouraging innovation", Tongji SFL regards national strategies and social demands as our ultimate aim to meet the needs of the New Era and the consequent development and reform of foreign language studies. A model of "personalized, project-driven and internationalized" education is established to enable the development of future leaders and professionals equipped with interdisciplinary knowledge, innovation ability and international horizons.

Based on the five major research fields of foreign language studies, Tongji SFL has been insisting on problem-oriented and interdisciplinary innovation, and thriving by preserving traditions and promoting innovation. Emphasis is placed on five clusters in functional linguistics, translation theory of discourse with Chinese characteristics, multidisciplinary country studies of Germany and Europe, research of language cognition and rehabilitation of specific populations, innovative hermeneutics and critique of foreign language classics while systematic and characteristic highland of the discipline is formed. Among these five clusters, the high-end thinktank of research on Germany and Europe has exerted significant influence, whose research results have been considered as an authoritative basis for China to study Sino-EU and Sino-German relations; three clusters, namely translation of the Chinese discursive system, research of language cognition and rehabilitation of specific populations, research of national language governance and language planning, have also produced remarkably leading and gathering effects evidenced by the national silver award and the Shanghai gold award won by the social practice projects in the respective fields.

Source： *https://sfs.tongji.edu.cn/sfsen/*

RESEARCH CENTER FOR AGEING, LANGUAGE AND CARE

同济大学老龄语言与看护研究中心
TONGJI UNIVERSITY – RESEARCH CENTER FOR AGEING, LANGUAGE AND CARE
健康中国 美好世界

The Research Center for Ageing, Language and Care at Tongji University was created to address the important issues of language aging and cognitive preservation in the context of global aging, with a particular focus on China's aging population and the frontiers in aging studies. The Center is among the first independent institutions of its kind in China to adopt multimodal approaches and conduct academic research, personnel training and social services in the field of language aging, cognitive decline, and gerontology.

Utilizing multifaceted disciplinary approaches including linguistics, medicine, gerontology, psychology, sociology and management, the Center conducts fundamental research on linguistic behavior, cognitive pattern and pathomechanism of seniors with dementia. The Center also carries out research and development on early diagnosis, cognitive training, disease management and database construction with the help of Artificial Intelligence technology. We also screen for cognitive impairment and participate in social services, as well as providing think tank suggestions for governments on aging-friendly community construction and aging society management.

The Center has formulated a detailed roadmap covering basic research, clinical applications and health services. Our members have published widely in SCI, SSCI, EI or CSSCI indexing journals or manuscripts with reputable publishers entitled "Multimodality and Special People Speech Studies Series". The Center has organized several high-level forums on multimodal and language aging studies and actively engaged itself in the development of computer-aided cognitive assessment system and provided the community with health service based on the research outcomes.

As a leading innovative research institution in China, the Center works closely with the academic, clinical, and industrial sectors to carry out research that aims to promote active aging of the growing population of China's aging seniors.

Source： *https://ageing.tongji.edu.cn/index.htm*

ONSITE CONFERENCE VENUE HUIWEN BUILDING

The physical conference will be held in the conference hall of the Huiwen Building, situated at the southern edge of the campus and within easy walking distance of the main gate on Siping Road. Completed in 1982, this building has stood as a quiet witness to the university's academic journey for decades. In summer, its exterior walls are adorned with lush green ivy, bursting with vitality and bringing a refreshing touch of nature to the scholarly environment. It has historically hosted a variety of international conferences, seminars, and lectures, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, thereby contributing to interdisciplinary dialogue and international cultural research.

ONLINE CONFERENCE VENUE – TEAMS

Microsoft Teams

Online participants are kindly requested to attend the conference via Microsoft Teams. The platform is accessible either by downloading the desktop application or by joining directly through a web browser: Microsoft Teams supports meetings of up to 30 hours with a capacity of up to 300 participants, ensuring stable and flexible participation.

For those concerned about potential network instability or scheduling conflicts, it is recommended to prepare a pre-recorded presentation video in advance.

Please visit the following link for more information:

https://www.microsoft.com/zh-cn/microsoft-teams/download-app#download-for-desktop1

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Tuesday, May 12th	**14:00-20:00**	**Registration**
Wednesday, May 13th	**9:00-15:00**	**Registration**
Venue	**Registration: Lobby, First Floor, Huiwen Building**	
	Poster Session: Room 523, Huiwen Building	
	All Other Sessions: Room 518, Huiwen Building	

Time (UTC+8)	Wednesday, May 13th	Thursday, May 14th	Friday, May 15th
9:00–9:20	***Welcome*** ***Opening Remarks***	#13 Diiorio, Dion, & Poplack [online]	#22 Davis, Troutman-Jordan, & Maclagan [online]
9:20–9:40	**KEYNOTE # 1** **Yueguo Gu**	#14 Diiorio [online]	**KEYNOTE # 4** **Allison Koenecke [online]**
9:40–10:00		**KEYNOTE # 3** **Lihe Huang**	
10:00–10:20	#1 Bowie & Gerstenberg		#23 Wang, Wang, & Boland [online]
10:20–10:40	***Coffee Break***	***Coffee Break***	***Coffee Break***
10:40–11:00	**KEYNOTE # 2** **Tony McEnery**	#15 Sheard, Clark & McAuliffe	**KEYNOTE # 5** **Michaela Hejná**
11:00–11:20		#16 Sekerina et al.	
11:20–11:40	#2 Guo & Lefelle	#17 Sekerina & Gravelle	#24 Rodionova, Psaryova, & Malyutina
11:40–12:00	#3 Bowie	#18 Gerstenberg & Hejná	Closing Remarks
12:00–13:00	***Lunch***	***Lunch***	FREE
13:30–13:50	#4 Gong et al.	Poster Sessions	
13:50–14:10	#5 Gong, Zhu, & Jiang		
14:10–14:30	#6 Parkman		
14:30–14:50	#7 Grama et al. [online]		
14:50–15:10	#8 Wang & Wei [online]		
15:10–15:30	#9 Zhou		
15:30–15:50	***Coffee Break***	***Coffee Break***	
15:50–16:10	#10 Su [online]	#19 Psaryova, Zvereva, & Malyutina [online]	
16:10–16:30	#11 Liu & Luo	#20 Rodionova et al.	
16:30–16:50	#12 Ivanova [online]	#21 Baert et al. [online]	

Keynote Speeches | Regular Sessions | Poster Sessions | Break/Meal | Online Presentation

Conference on Corpora for Language and Aging Research (CLARe7)

13 MAY 2026

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

9:00–9:20	**Welcome & Opening Remarks**
9:20–10:00	**Keynote #1: Yueguo Gu** (Beijing Foreign Studies University) A diary-based investigation of active ageing in everyday life
10:00–10:20	**Paper #1: David Bowie, Annette Gerstenberg** *The Journal of Language and Aging Research* (JLAR): Exploring new ways to showcase our research community
10:20–10:40	**Coffee Break**
10:40–11:20	**Keynote #2: Tony McEnery** (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University) Age and health - A corpus-based perspective
11:20–11:40	**Paper #2: Weiwei Guo, Marie Lefelle** From evaluation to facilitation: How caregivers' stances shape participation and identities in nursing home activities
11:40–12:00	**Paper #3: David Bowie** Word-medial "t-dropping": A panel study of variation across the lifespan
12:00–13:00	**Lunch**
13:30–13:50	**Paper #4: Zhiyi Gong, Qianru Yang, Zixuan Xiong, Kejing Lu, Kun Du, Feng GU** Age-dependent processing of syntactic focus in mandarin: Evidence from eye-tracking
13:50–14:10	**Paper #5: Yipu Gong, Lisi Zhu, Yixin Jiang** The impact of color effects on cognitive processing in older adult EFL learners
14:10–14:30	**Paper #6: Seren Parkman** The effect of cognition and motor control on voice quality across the lifespan
14:30–14:50	**Paper #7: James Grama, Isabelle Buchstaller, Lea Bauernfeind, Anne-**

	Marie Moelders (online) A new perspective on life-span (in)stability: Using random forests to assess the importance of stylistic variation, diachronic change and linguistic constraints
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15:10–15:30	**Paper #9: Bingzhu Zhou** Identity construction of older adults with mental health conditions: insights from a sociolinguistic study in Japan
15:30–15:50	**Coffee Break**
15:50–16:10	**Paper #10: Xiaodi Su** (online) Constructing later-life identities through public terms of address: A comparative study of Japan and China
16:10–16:30	**Paper #11: Yufei Liu, Zhengpeng Luo** “Let me tell you!”: Storytelling in home-based eldercare communication
16:30–16:50	**Paper #12: Olga Ivanova** (online) Towards a corpus of phonetic biomarkers of healthy and pathological aging: The FONEMA project

Conference on Corpora for Language and Aging Research (CLARe7)

14 MAY 2026

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

9:00–9:20	**Paper #13: Maryn Diiorio, Nathalie Dion, Shana Poplack** (online) Quantifying sociality in old age: A novel approach to characterizing change post critical period
9:20–9:40	**Paper #14: Maryn Diiorio** (online) A question of complexity: Assessing the integrity of question formation in old age
9:40–10:20	**Keynote #3: Lihe Huang** (Tongji University) Multimodal corpus-based studies of language development: A plea for *Lifespan Linguistics*
10:20–10:40	**Coffee Break**
10:40–11:00	**Paper #15: Elena Sheard, Lynn Clark, Megan McAuliffe** Community sound changes in later life: chronological age, speaker self-perception, and the realisation of New Zealand English short front vowels
11:00–11:20	**Paper #16: Irina A. Sekerina, Kisselev Olesya, Angelina Rubina, Aleksandra** Lexical characteristics and complexity of older bilingual heritage speakers in narrative production
11:20–11:40	**Paper #17: Irina A. Sekerina, Donnan Gravelle** Lexical networks modeling of the mental lexicon of older bilingual heritage speakers
11:40–12:00	**Paper #18: Annette Gerstenberg, Michaela Hejná** Aging voices in AI-supported ASR
12:00–13:00	**Lunch**
13:30–15:30	**Poster Session**
15:30–15:50	**Coffee Break**
15:50–16:10	**Paper #19: Nadezhda Psaryova, Arina Zvereva, Svetlana Malyutina** (online) Speech fluency as a marker of cognitive decline
16:10–16:30	**Paper #20: Ekaterina Rodionova, Nikita Cherkasov, Arina Zvereva, Svetlana Malyutina**

	Clustering characteristics in verbal fluency tasks as markers of cognitive decline in the elderly
16:30–16:50	**Paper #21: Lara Baert, Reinhild Vandekerckhove, Sarah Bernolet, Astrid De Wit** (online) Old Rules, new symbols: Sociolinguistic patterns of emoji and punctuation use in later life

Conference on Corpora for Language and Aging Research (CLARe7)

15 MAY 2026

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

9:00–9:20	**Paper #22: Boyd Davis, Meredith Troutman-Jordan, Margaret Maclagan** (online) More than just words: Topic shift in conversations with people living with dementia
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10:00–10:20	**Paper #23: Minli Wang, Min Wang, Julie E. Boland** (online) Aging affects short and long-term cumulative priming effects for language production
10:20–10:40	**Coffee Break**
10:40–11:20	**Keynote #5: Michaela Hejná** (Aarhus University) From biology to biography and back again: how age emerges in the sounds of speech
11:20–11:40	**Paper #24: Ekaterina Rodionova, Nadezhda Psaryova, Svetlana Malyutina** Lexico-semantic characteristics of older adults' spontaneous speech as markers of cognitive impairment
11:40–12:00	**CLOSING REMARKS**

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS Listed in the order of presentation

Professor Yueguo Gu is Chief Expert at the Key Laboratory of Artificial Intelligence and Human Language, Beijing Foreign Studies University. He formerly served as Research Professor at the Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and as Chief Research Fellow of the academy's Innovation Project. He received an MA with distinction in Language Studies from the Department of Linguistics, Lancaster University, in 1985, and obtained his PhD in Pragmatics and Rhetoric from the same department in 1987 under the supervision of Geoffrey Leech, Fellow of the British Academy. His primary research interests include gerontolinguistics, corpus linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and online education.

He currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of ChinaCALL* and previously served as Editor-in-Chief of *Contemporary Linguistics* from 1998 to 2015. He is also Chair of the Committee on Intelligent Language Teaching under the China Association for Comparative Studies of English and Chinese. His international academic appointments have included Distinguished Professor at University of Nottingham, Distinguished Research Fellow at University of Sydney, Visiting Lecturing Professor at Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, Adjunct Professor at Western Sydney University, External Academic Advisor at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Visiting Professor at National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, and Guest Professor at Shanxi University.

Professor Tony McEnery is Chair Professor in the Department of English and Communication, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Adjunct Professor at Xi'an Jiaotong University, Advisory Professor at Shanghai International Studies University and emeritus Professor at Lancaster University. He has published widely on corpus linguistics and is the author of Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice (with Andrew Hardie, Cambridge University Press, 2011). His latest books are Learner Language, Discourse and Interaction: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Spoken English (with Isobelle Clarke and Gavin Brookes) and was published by Cambridge University Press in 2025. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, the Global China Academy and the Royal Society of Arts in the UK.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS Listed in the order of presentation

Professor Lihe Huang is Tenured Professor at Tongji University, where he serves as Deputy Director of the Office of Humanities and Social Sciences and Secretary-General of the Research Center for Ageing, Language and Care. His research focuses on multimodality, pragmatics, and ageing-related language studies, with particular emphasis on AI-assisted screening and intervention for cognitive-linguistic health. He has led over twenty major research projects, and has published extensively in his field. Professor Huang is a Humboldt Fellow and a recipient of several prestigious national and municipal talent awards, with significant contributions to ageing, language, and cognitive health research.

Allison Koenecke is an Assistant Professor of Information Science at Cornell Tech. Her research on algorithmic fairness applies computational methods, such as machine learning and causal inference, to study societal inequities in domains from online services to public health. Koenecke is regularly quoted as an expert on disparities in automated speech-to-text systems. She previously held a postdoctoral researcher role at Microsoft Research and received her PhD from Stanford's Institute for Computational and Mathematical Engineering. She is the recipient of several NSF grants and a Cornell CIS DEIB Faculty of the Year Award, and has been honored as a Sloan Fellow in Computer Science and Forbes 30 Under 30 lister in Science.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS Listed in the order of presentation

Professor Michaela Hejná is Associate Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark, where she directs the interdisciplinary Centre of Voice Studies. A specialist in sociolinguistics and phonetics, her research focuses on voice quality, language variation, and the role of voice across linguistic and interdisciplinary contexts. Her work integrates perspectives from linguistics, voice studies, and the humanities, contributing to the growing field of interdisciplinary voice research.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

WEDNESDAY **IN-PERSON**

KEYNOTE #1: 9:20–10:00

A diary-based investigation of active ageing in everyday life

Yueguo Gu, Beijing Foreign Studies University

The World Health Organization (WHO), in response to population ageing, issues *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework* (2002). The concept of active ageing, i.e., "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age" (p. 12), has now been "actively" accepted worldwide. In the final analysis, it is the ultimate agent, the older people at the grassroot level, whose everyday life bears the burden of practice and evidence of successful or failed policies. This paper attempts to investigate the grassroot level of active ageing experiences lived in everyday life by some older people in Chinese cultural context. The investigation is built on two pivotal concepts, viz. lived experience and everyday life, which will be clarified both conceptually and operationally. The investigative method, as indicated in the title, is diary-based, that is, daily journals kept by older people as diarists. What is distinctive is that diaries are voice narrative accounts self-recorded through smart phones, thus giving rise to what is called multimodal & multimedia corpus of gerontic journals (MMCGJ for short). The bulk of the paper is dedicated to demonstrating how the MMCGJ is being processed and the ways the older diarists live their everyday lives. The international classification of functioning, disability and health (known as ICF) will be adopted to evaluate if the diarists' lives are active or otherwise.

PAPER #1: 10:00–10:20

The Journal of Language and Aging Research (JLAR): Exploring new ways to showcase our research community

David Bowie, University of Alaska Anchorage
Annette Gerstenberg, University of Potsdam

The seventh Conference on Language and Aging Research (CLARe7), now more than a decade after the first CLARe network meeting, clearly shows that the topic of language and aging has become increasingly recognized. To sustain this dynamic, the *Journal of Language and Aging Research* (JLAR) was created as a venue for the sharing and promulgation of language and aging research. As with any journal, JLAR includes research papers alongside other items such as reviews and editorials, and allows for the publication of special issues and conference reports (Bowie, 2023), but it has also been set up to allow for other sorts of presentations of research and materials, such as the recently-launched series of corpus presentations.

Despite the increasing interest in the study of language and aging, many fields within linguistics largely ignore the effects of age or at most consider it to be a variable that merits attention only insofar as it is methodologically convenient. And even when age is considered as part of linguistic analysis, *aging* that is, the processes involved in age changing over time tends to overly simplified.

One side effect of this is that aging is often framed both explicitly and implicitly as necessarily being connected to *decline*. This is at some level reasonable, given commonly-held assumptions about age and aging, but most humans actually experience several decades of aging in which there is no decline that pushes communication outside the bounds of what is called "normal." It is thus worth questioning our idea of normality, and what this discourse of decline is referring to. For example, to what extent are markers of what is called "decline" really reflections of actual decline? And what does it mean when there is a decrease in one measurable cognitive feature correlated with age (presumably, an age-related decline) that is accompanied by an increase in a related cognitive feature? If we focus only on the downward changes, we risk strengthening ageist social constructions of aging rather than reflecting aging's realities.

JLAR provides a venue to compare and confront very different approaches, as language and aging research will particularly benefit from intra-linguistic along with interdisciplinary exchange. It invites us to increasingly take into consideration different cultures and languages, and especially understudied languages, which can lead to the development of new tools to use in the study of the intersection of language and aging.

JLAR was developed in cooperation with the University of Hamburg Libraries using the Open Journal System framework. It provides transparency in the journal's administration while allowing it to be a part of the scholarly ecosystem via modern network identifiers such as DOIs and Crossref, with automated inclusion in databases such as Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar. The journal is published using an Open Access license and will progressively contribute to making language and aging research part of Open Science. JLAR provides a way to reach out not just to the academic community, but also to older adults themselves and their social environment, while offering insights that respond to society's interest in and fascination with aging.

KEYNOTE #2: 10:40–11:20

Age and health - A corpus-based perspective

Tony McEnery, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Corpora are giving us insight into the impact of age on language and the relationship of language to age. In this talk I will look at a series of case studies to see how these insights are helping health professionals as much as linguists in approaching the relationship between age and language. In the first case study I will consider the impact of age on language use by considering how one feature of language use, bad language, interacts with age. As part of that I will introduce the concepts of cohort effects and age grading. Following on from that I will look at a second case study exploring the healthcare experiences of people of different ages, seeing how age aligns with perceived outcomes and satisfaction. Finally, I will look at how one particular illness which is age related, dementia, is represented in the media. Through these case studies I will explore insights linguists can gain into age from corpus data (first case study), how age can help us to organize and understand healthcare experiences (second case study) and how language can be used to construct age related illnesses and how issues with that may be challenged (third case study). Overall, the talk will argue that corpus data is a very powerful source of evidence for examining age and language, and that the insights gained have practical applications.

PAPER #2: 11:20–11:40

From evaluation to facilitation: How caregivers' stances shape participation and identities in nursing home activities

Weiwei Guo, Université Lyon 2
Marie Lefelle, Université de Lille

This study examines how caregivers/animators and residents in nursing homes (EHPADs) co-construct the context and identities that shape collective activities. While research on elderspeak has primarily focused on simplified or infantilizing speech forms (Kemper et al., 1998; Shaw & Gordon, 2021), very few studies have investigated how the design of activities and interactional practices jointly influence participation, engagement, and the construction of residents' identities.

Grounded in interactional linguistics and informed by Heritage's (2005) framework on institutional talk, this research employs tools from interaction analysis to explore how caregivers' positioning, as teacher, evaluator, facilitator, or peer, affects residents' participation and agency.

The corpus comprises audiovisual data collected in two nursing homes, one in France and one in China. It includes two olfactory workshops (2024 and 2025), two music quiz sessions, and one newspaper reading session. Multimodal transcriptions were coded in ATLAS.ti with a focus on turn-taking distribution, types of questions, reformulations, and the thematic nature of residents' contributions. The analysis follows Traverso's (2016) framework, which posits that « context is not immutably given at the beginning of an interaction […] but is continuously redefined by the participants and the actions they accomplish. » Interactional identities are likewise negotiated and redefined throughout the exchanges.

Comparative analysis reveals contrasting interactional dynamics. In the 2024 olfactory workshop in China, the caregiver dominates the interaction with long explanations and evaluative questions, positioning residents as learners and reducing their contributions to brief responses, often with isolated words. Compliments, although frequent, sometimes take on an infantilizing tone, reinforcing a classroom-like hierarchy. In contrast, the 2025 workshop, designed as a board game jointly discovered by caregivers and residents, fosters spontaneous speech, longer and more elaborate contributions, and a broader thematic range. Here, caregivers adopt a facilitative stance and encourage participation through open-ended follow-up questions.

In the French context, the music quiz workshops resemble the 2024 Chinese session: caregivers control speech distribution and assume an evaluator role, while residents produce minimal responses. By contrast, the newspaper reading workshop displays a more cooperative dynamic: the caregiver alternates between reading and commenting while leaving significant space for residents' reactions, enabling genuine co-construction of the conversation.

These findings highlight how caregivers' interactional positioning strongly shapes residents' participation. A pedagogical or school-like stance tends to restrict speech and induce passivity, whereas game-based activities or conversational formats, where caregivers do not position themselves as exclusive holders of knowledge, foster residents' engagement, participation and expression. More broadly, the study demonstrates that infantilization or empowerment of older adults is not only discursively enacted but also

emerges from the interactional context and the negotiation of identities. This perspective opens new avenues for designing collective activities that promote dignity and autonomy in elderly care.

References

Kemper, S., Finter-Urczyk, A., Ferrell, P., Harden, T., & Billington, C. (1998). Using elderspeak with older adults. Discourse Processes, 25(1), 55–73.

Shaw, C. A., & Gordon, J. K. (2021). Understanding elderspeak: An evolutionary concept analysis. Innovation in Aging, 5(3), igab023.

Traverso, V. (2016). Décrire le français parlé en interaction. Ophrys éditions.

Heritage, J. (2005). Conversation analysis and institutional talk. In K. L. Fitch & R. E. Sanders (Eds.), Handbook of Language and Social Interaction (pp. 103–146).

PAPER #3: 11:40–12:00

Word-medial "t-dropping": A panel study of variation across the lifespan

David Bowie, University of Alaska Anchorage

There is a widespread folk-linguistic belief among speakers of English from the US state of Utah that "*t*-dropping" (the local term for glottalization of /t/ before syllabic nasals) distinguishes Utah English from other American Englishes, even though glottalization of /t/ in such contexts is widespread throughout North American English. Eddington & Savage (2012) have found, though, that present-day Utah English does behave somewhat differently from other North American Englishes, in that a widespread realization is an oral release of the glottal stop (e.g., *mountain* produced as [mɑʊnʔən], not [mɑʊnʔn̩]). This study investigates the production of this feature across the lifespan of a group of Utah English speakers, and simultaneously investigates the possible origins of the feature by using speakers found in the LDS General Conference Recordings Corpus (Bowie & Christensen 2025).

20 Utah English speakers born between 1871 and 1928 who appeared at least five times over a span of at least 20 years in the corpus were selected, and all instances of /t/ both before syllabic nasals and in flapping contexts were coded for the realization of /t/. The makeup of the archive, with speakers appearing repeatedly across decades, allowed for analyses based in both apparent and real time. An apparent time analysis found a decrease over time in the realization of /t/ as [t] in flapping contexts and an increase in [ʔ] before syllabic nasals. Further, the pre-nasal glottal realization was effectively never followed by an oral release (i.e., into [ən] rather than [n̩]), lending credence to Eddington & Savage's (2012) suggestion that the oral release is a recent innovation.

This is complicated by the lifespan findings, however, which show that many speakers exhibited significant intraindividual variation across decades—for example some speakers produced /t/ as a glottal stop 100% of the time at some points in life but less than half the time at other points. This parallels the at times sizable intraindividual variation previously found among these speakers for other variables (e.g., Bowie 2019, 2021). However, unlike those other variables, the trends over the lifespan generally move toward the present-day community norm. Since the realization of medial /t/ is socially salient in this community, this supports the claim (made by, e.g., Sankoff & Blondeau 2007) that lifespan change and variation for specific linguistic variables is influenced by social awareness (or the lack of social awareness) surrounding them.

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PAPER #4: 13:30–13:50

Age-dependent processing of syntactic focus in mandarin: Evidence from eye-tracking

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Zixuan Xiong, Sichuan University
Kejing Lu, Sichuan University
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Syntactic focus plays an important role in directing attention during sentence comprehension, yet its processing across different age groups remains underexplored, particularly in Mandarin Chinese, where focus is encoded through syntactic constructions such as *shi…de*. This study explores age-related differences in the processing of syntactic focus in Mandarin using eye-tracking. Native Mandarin speakers from younger and older adult groups read sentences with and without syntactic focus marking while their eye movements were recorded. Analyses indicate age-related differences in reading patterns associated with focus marking. Older adults tended to show greater processing cost in focus-marked sentences, whereas younger adults displayed relatively stable reading behavior across conditions. These findings suggest that overt syntactic focus cues may interact with cognitive aging during real-time sentence processing and underscore the role of structural salience in shaping attentional allocation in Mandarin reading.

PAPER #5: 13:50–14:10

The impact of color effects on cognitive processing in older adult EFL learners: A systematic review

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Behavioral experiments in educational psychology have demonstrated bidirectional influences between language and color cognition: while bilingualism can shape color perception, color cognition also impacts linguistic behavior. However, it remains unclear whether color effects can modulate cognitive processing in older adults through foreign language learning. To address this gap, this study conducts a systematic review of literature from the past two decades using CiteSpace for quantitative and visual analysis. By mapping research hotspots, theoretical frameworks, and evolutionary trends, this review identifies a significant lack of studies focusing on older adult EFL learners. The findings aim to provide a novel, comprehensive perspective on the interaction between foreign language learning and color cognition. Furthermore, this study seeks to establish a theoretical foundation for future empirical research on how color effects influence cognitive processing in this specific population, ultimately contributing to the development of targeted foreign language education and cognitive intervention strategies for the aging population.

PAPER #6: 14:10–14:30

The effect of cognition and motor control on voice quality across the lifespan

Seren Parkman, Lancaster University

Previous research demonstrates that increasing chronological age can lead to distinct changes in the voice (Harrington et al., 2007; Hejná & Jespersen, 2021, 2022; Reubold et al., 2010). This includes changes in voice quality measures such as f_0, shimmer and jitter (Deqan et al., 2012; Goy et al., 2013; Linville & Korabic, 1987; Rojas et al., 2020). However, results show considerable variability, due to presumed social factors, methodological differences between studies (Ambreen et al., 2019; Spazzapan et al., 2024), and importantly biological factors. I hypothesise therefore that cognitive and motor control differences might lead to differing rates and patterns of changes in the voice as people age.

Despite the current increased momentum of age-related research, few studies discuss phonetic changes as a result of age, and their links to cognition and motor control. Given this, how does age interact with cognitive and motor control across the lifespan, in relation to voice quality?

In this study, I observe the relationship between chronological age and cognitive and motor control, to understand how this may impact on voice quality. 140 participants were recruited from Lancaster and Morecambe, North-West of England and were split into two age-groups: 1) 84 speakers aged 16-37 years (M=16.39, SD=4.47), of which there were 55 females and 29 males, and 2) 56 speakers aged 65-95 years (M=74.25, SD=6.92). Participants completed several representative cognitive and motor control tasks including a digit span, diadochokinetic (DDK), and trail making task (Chan & Elliott, 2011; Dawson, 2020; Lu & Bigler, 2002). Participants also completed an interview, questionnaire, and a reading passage from which f_0, shimmer and jitter were extracted from the vowels. This produced 10,541 tokens for analysis.

Results indicate that f_0 values decreased between the two age group, for female speakers and increased between the two age groups for male speakers. Changes in shimmer and jitter between speakers of both sexes were found to be non-significant and highly vowel dependent.

I use principal component analysis to reduce the dimensionality of the cognitive and motor control data to compare it to the speech data. I then fitted linear-mixed effect models (Bates et al., 2015) to understand the interactions between acoustic variation and cognition and motor control. Results from the models indicate a significant effect of cognitive control on female jitter, with increased cognition giving rise to higher jitter values in younger speakers, and lower jitter values in older speakers. Surprisingly, we found limited effects of motor control on voice quality in this study. Models were also used to compare social factors such as smoking, educational levels, exercise, and second-language use alongside these biological factors. Our findings demonstrate that voice quality changes cannot be fully captured by chronological ageing alone, but emerges from the interactions between biological and social paradigms.

This study highlights the importance of continued ageing research in phonetic spaces to ensure we understand the multi-dimensional ageing process in relation to biological changes (Bowie, 2023; Pichler, 2023; Pichler et al., 2018).

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PAPER #7: 14:30–14:50

A new perspective on life-span (in)stability: Using random forests to assess the importance of stylistic variation, diachronic change and linguistic constraints

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This paper proposes a new computational approach for evaluating the complex factors underpinning intra-speaker malleability across the lifespan. To this aim, we apply the Boruta algorithm (Kursa & Rudnicki 2010), a random forest wrapper, to a bespoke panel corpus which contains 28 speakers across 6 consecutive life stages (Buchstaller et al. 2022). Our analysis tests two sociolinguistic axioms. First, we assess Bell's (1984) classic style axiom that variation in the speech of the individual derives from inter-speaker variation. This hypothesis would lead us to expect the range of intra-speaker variation (by interlocutor or topic) in our panel sample to be smaller than the observed variation between different groups of speakers. Following Rickford's (2021) call to consider "stylistic variation [across the lifespan] as a source of insight rather than a problem and to set up systematic strategies for considering it", our analysis also explores the relationship between intra-speaker stylistic variation at one time-point versus intra-speaker change cross time.

Second, we probe the axiom that "linguistic constraints have the most powerful effect of all on a variable", and outweigh social factors (Meyerhoff 2011:50; Preston 1991; Sanchez 2008). Empirical support for these hypothesized factor orderings is difficult to synthesize (see Baugh 1979) and the extent to which these effects are constrained by a variable's position in the linguistic architecture remains an open question.

We focus on four changes in progress, two phonetic changes (FACE, GOAT), and two morphosyntactic ones (the 1st person possessive, quotation). Unlike other random forest methods, Boruta identifies *all* relevant attributes for classification (Nilsson et al. 2007:601602), making it ideal for the kind of data we consider because it can be fit to dependent variables with multiple levels, is not hampered by covariation, and is able to accommodate sparse datasets (cf. Dickson & Durantin 2019:198). Boruta produces a metric that captures the predicted accuracy of a model that does *not* include the given feature. This mean-decrease accuracy correlates roughly to 'importance', which we can compare relativistically to the other predictors in the Boruta to gain a general sense of the explanatory power of a factor.

Findings across the life-span provide support for Bell's style axiom; intra-speaker stylistic shifts are typically ranked amongst the lowest constraints overall, specifically in relation to measures of change, where both change across cohort (apparent time) and intraspeaker (lifespan) change weigh more heavily. However, support for the 2nd axiom is mixed: While linguistic factors rank relatively low for phonetic variables, they rank highly for the morphosyntactic ones. In generalizing our results, we explore how internal factors may be conceived of separately from the envelope of variation.

Crucially, our Boruta-based analysis suggests that measures of change generally outweigh stylistic factors. However, following increasing reports of the individualistic nature of aging (Eckert 1997, Pichler 2018), our analysis reveals that speaker as a predictor is typically ranked higher than either indicators of change or

style. We interpret this finding as a clear indication that panel analysts need to take account of individual variation in modelling lifespan data.

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PAPER #8: 14:50–15:10

Language learning in later life: A bibliometric and content analysis

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While language learning among young adults has been extensively studied, the accumulation of scientific knowledge regarding language learning among older adults (e.g., those aged 60 and above) remains relatively unexplored. As most existing reviews have relied on content analysis which tends to be subjective in interpretation, the present study innovatively integrated bibliometric analysis with the often-used content analysis to provide a comprehensive overview of research on language learning in older adulthood. Based on 1,096 articles retrieved from Scopus, this review identified: (1) growing interest in seniors' language learning across ageing-related disciplines and applied linguistics; (2) four key research themes—factors influencing learning (19.6%), learning process (25.2%), cognitive outcomes (38.3%), and non-cognitive outcomes (12.2%) and (3) a shift from a predominantly cognitive focus to a more holistic framework that incorporates psychological factors such as motivation and well-being. It is suggested that future studies stand to gain by incorporating both cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions to obtain a more holistic picture of language learning outcomes. These insights offer valuable contributions to scholars in the fields of language learning and beyond.

PAPER #9: 15:10–15:30

Identity construction of older adults with mental health conditions: Insights from a sociolinguistic study in Japan

Bingzhu Zhou, Jiangnan University

This study examines the identity construction of older adults with mental health conditions from a sociolinguistic perspective, focusing on members of a mutual support group in Yokohama, Japan, who are engaged in what is locally referred to as *chiiki seikatsu* (community-based living). Discourse data were collected through 16 interview sessions with 13 participants, all diagnosed with conditions such as schizophrenia, depression, or bipolar disorder. Conducted between November 2019 and November 2022 in person and via Zoom, these interviews shed light on how older adults with mental health conditions navigate interpersonal relationships, construct their identities, and negotiate behavioral norms within both disability communities and the broader neurotypical society.

Three research questions guide the analysis: (1) What types of language use are involved in constructing identity? (2) What kinds of identities and relationships are formed? (3) What social norms surrounding mental disability are present, and how are they reproduced or transformed?

The findings reveal that marked lexical choices (e.g., "able-bodied individuals," "boundary," "ambitious," "sick—weak—incompetent"), discourse adverbs such as "after all," and narrative fragments, including small stories and constructed dialogues, serve as key resources in identity work. Participants positioned themselves as active members of disability communities, hospital users, educated individuals resisting stereotypes, or bridge-builders seeking mutual understanding with non-disabled people. Peer supporter and pioneer roles emerged in interaction, underscoring their agency in forging new paths. At the socio-cultural level, solidarity often derived from shared lived experiences. Finally, while disability communities presupposed mutual understanding, hierarchies surfaced based on diagnosis, education, and values. The pursuit of "normalcy" remained a dominant norm across contexts. Visibility was also crucial: unlike physical aids such as canes, invisible mental disabilities lacked embodied markers, disadvantaging those perceived as "normal" (Polanyi, 2003; Iino, 2021).

This paper is part of the author's doctoral research conducted in Japan. Building on these findings, the next stage of research will localize this inquiry within the Chinese context, examining how older adults with mental health conditions construct identities and negotiate norms in community-based living in China.

PAPER #10: 15:50–16:10

Constructing later-life identities through public terms of address: A comparative study of Japan and China

Xiaodi Su, Independent researcher

Comparative research on aging has largely focused on contrasts between "Western" and "Eastern" societies, while differences within Asia have received far less attention (North & Fiske 2015; Okumura 2022). Although Japan and China have both been historically shaped by Confucian traditions, differences in social development, demographic change, and the pace of population aging have produced divergent ways of constructing later-life identities. Nevertheless, direct comparative studies between Japan and China remain limited.

Much existing research on aging has examined images of older adults through multimodal analyses of newspapers, literature, and visual media (e.g., Hagiwara & Arima 2009; Liu & Meng 2025). By contrast, relatively little attention has been paid to linguistic terms of address that directly designate older adults. Terms of address function as practices of social labeling: by naming a group, they index social roles, generational expectations, and age-related identities. Analyzing such terms thus provides a productive lens for examining the multidimensional construction of later-life identities.

This study analyzes terms of address for older adults as they appear in newspapers, policy documents, commercial advertising, and online discourse in Japan and China. It focuses on their indexical functions, evaluative stances (respectful, neutral, pejorative), and the conceptual frames they evoke, including wisdom and authority, social burden, and consumer identity.

Several features can be observed in the analysis. First, in both languages, respectful terms—such as *qianlang*, *laoqianbei*, and *laozuzon* in Chinese, and *jukurensō* and *betoran sedai* in Japanese—construct older adults as bearers of wisdom, experience, and authority. However, Chinese discourse more strongly foregrounds family-centered values, exemplified by *laozuzong*. This orientation is further evidenced by terms such as *kongchao laoren* ("empty-nest elderly"), *gugua laoren* ("elderly living alone"), and the recently popular *laopiaozu* ("migrant elderly"), which focus on changes in family relations and living arrangements and anchor later-life identities in familial roles rather than broader social structures.

When evaluative stances are pejorative, Chinese terms such as *laowangu*, *laodongxi*, and *laobusi de* primarily target individual personality traits or behaviors, reflecting an individualized and moralized construction of later-life identity. Even the popular term *laodeng*, while categorizing older adults as a recognizable type, centers evaluation on individual character. In contrast, Japanese pejoratives such as *rōgai* and *sodai gomi* frame older adults as a collective group and foreground their perceived social impact and structural burden in a super-aged society, emphasizing intergenerational tensions rather than individual shortcomings.

Finally, in both countries, terms such as *yinfazu* and *xinpai laoren* in Chinese, and *akutibu shinia* and *second life sedai* in Japanese, construct older adults as financially and temporally autonomous actors who actively participate in society after retirement. These expressions frame later life in terms of activity and self-management and reflect discourses of successful aging (Rowe & Kahn 1987).

By focusing on repeatedly used terms of address in public discourse, this study demonstrates that later-life identities in Japan and China are dynamically constructed across multiple frames—reverence, social burden, and economic resource. Moving beyond a simple West–East dichotomy, it offers an intra-Asian perspective on the linguistic and social negotiation of later life.

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PAPER #11: 16:10–16:30

"Let me tell you!": Storytelling in home-based eldercare communication

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Zhengpeng Luo, Peking University

Home-based care has become a predominant mode of elderly care in China amidst rapid population aging. This paper draws on a narratives-as-practices approach (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011; De Fina, 2021) to analyze storytelling in naturally-occurring, face-to-face interactions in four Chinese families. We examine what narratives are told, how they are constructed, and what interactional functions they perform in home-based eldercare communication. Two primary modes of storytelling were identified: 1) collaborative storytelling that involves interactions between older persons and their caregivers; and 2) unital storytelling where narratives are constructed by the storyteller alone, with limited participation or engagement from the listeners. Three narrative types can be further distinguished, namely, personal narratives, collective narratives, and vicarious narrative. All three types of narratives were observed in the collaborative mode of storytelling; whereas the unilateral mode of storytelling exclusively features vicarious narratives. These narratives were produced to perform a range of interactional goals in home-based eldercare communication, including fostering caregivers' understanding, advocating generational values, conveying expectations, and sustaining social bonds. Notably, the unilateral mode of storytelling only occurred in one of the families. We argue that this distributional pattern can be explained by Confucian filial piety in China, which emphasizes reverence for elders through obligatory responsiveness in interaction. By revealing narrative patterns and how they reflect and constitute power relations in the families, this study sheds light on the complexity of intergenerational communication in the emerging practice of home-based elderly care in China.

PAPER #12: 16:30–16:50

Towards a corpus of phonetic biomarkers of healthy and pathological aging: The FONEMA project

Olga Ivanova, Spain University of Salamanca

Phonetic changes have been reported as predictable and stable in both healthy and pathological aging. In pathological aging, phonetic changes can serve as the so-called 'biomarkers': persistent changes in speech that can point to the ongoing underlying pathology, mainly, a neurodegenerative disease. Despite their extensive study in recent years, phonetic biomarkers of pathological aging have not been systematised and analysed from a comparative perspective; neither have they been approached from a theoretical rationale and application to our understanding of how language ability changes during the lifespan.

This work presents the first outcomes of the FONEMA project: a corpus of phonetic biomarkers of neurodegenerative diseases -mainly, Alzheimer's disease- in their comparison with phonetic changes expectable in healthy aging. Based on an extensive meta-analysis and contrastive research, this work shares the first results from the FONEMA corpus: the identification of coarse-grained and fine-grained phonetic markers of pathological aging spectrum; the clustering probabilities of such phonetic markers; as well as their correlation with language typology.

The results of this presentation are discussed in the light of current theories of language change in aging and, specifically, their manifestations at the level of natural speech.

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026

THURSDAY **ONLINE**

PAPER #13: 9:00–9:20

Quantifying sociality in old age: A novel approach to characterizing change post critical period

Maryn Diiorio, University of Ottawa
Nathalie Dion, University of Ottawa
Shana Poplack, University of Ottawa

The possibility of observing change in progress is hailed as a cornerstone contribution of the variationist perspective to the field of linguistics. But a key premise on which it is based, the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH; Lenneberg 1967), which states that language remains relatively stable once acquired, has come into question. Adoption of the CPH has led sociolinguists to focus on youth as drivers of change, while neglecting older speakers, traditionally lumped into a single cohort (e.g. 65+). But gerontologists assure us that little is homogeneous amongst the elderly, inviting scrutiny as to whether the same is true of their language capacities.

In this paper we describe the novel methodology we have developed to go beyond chronological age in an ongoing project, "*Speaking while Aging*", whose aim is to assess the stability of speech in later life and the capacity for change over the lifespan. We ascertain whether older adults share the variant pool and conditioning of variability observed in the wider community, and whether they are capable – contra the CPH – of adopting novel forms introduced therein via change. Acknowledging the impossibility of participating in a change to which one has not been exposed, and the reality that exposure involves social integration, we distinguish reduced sociality from reduced *ability* to change.

Because the 135 individuals aged 65-104 who form our sample are no longer accessible, we developed a method to retroactively ascertain and quantify their individual levels of social participation for eventual consideration in statistical analyses. This involved 1) identifying elements relevant to sociality (e.g. living situation, activities [e.g. Barnes et al. 2004; James et al. 2011]); 2) systematically mining available (meta)data to extract all pertinent material (N=1,600+ quotes); 3) devising a scoring system to reflect the relative importance of the information; and 4) calculating points for each speaker. Scores range from 7% (for a rather isolated person) to 82%, corroborating that elderly age-mates are far from homogenous. Indeed, the metric confirms that chronological age and social participation are not coterminous; individuals of like ages may display wildly different situations.

A pilot study of spontaneous speech production illustrates the utility of this measure. The feature analyzed, discourse *like* (e.g. *And here I was,* ***like*** *learning, reading and writing and whatever* [QEC.191.262.age 80]), is both associated with youth and undergoing change (D'Arcy 2017). It is not only frequent (2,000+ occurrences), but also widespread, nearly all elderly participants using it at least once. Chronological age plays a role, since *like* is most frequent for those under 77 and least common among their older counterparts. But social integration proves more illuminating: the most prolific *like* users tend to rank highest and are

likeliest to produce the form in its most innovative contexts (e.g. pre-verbally, as above). This confirms that 1) given a socially favourable scenario, the linguistic system may in fact be altered to accommodate incoming forms (see also e.g. Buchstaller & Mearns 2018; Sankoff & Blondeau 2007); and 2) chronological age alone is an inadequate measure of capacity for change post-critical period.

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PAPER #14: 9:20–9:40

A question of complexity: Assessing the integrity of question formation in old age

Maryn Diiorio, University of Ottawa

It is commonly accepted amongst experimental linguists that as cognitive processing deteriorates later in life, so do aspects of language (Kemper, 1994; Shaw & Gordon, 2021; Simpson, 2002). Syntactic complexity is considered to be a key manifestation of such degradation. But evidence that this characterizes elderly speech is mixed: some studies conclude that complexity decays with age (Burke & Shafto, 2007; Kynette & Kemper, 1986), while others report stability (Labov & Auger, 1993; Nippold et al., 2014). My project addresses this controversy by assessing whether and how simplification may manifest in the speech of older individuals.

This paper explores these issues through analysis of English yes/no question formation. This is an ideal variable because its two variants differ in terms of cognitive load: subject–auxiliary inversion requires syntactic movement, whereas rising intonation maintains canonical word order. Data, consisting of 899 questions produced by 95 individuals across three age cohorts (18–35, 65–79, and 80+), are drawn from the Quebec English Corpus (Poplack et al., 2006) and form part of the Speaking While Aging project.

Going by the hypothesis that speakers simplify this variable as they get older, we would expect lower rates of inversion in the two older groups when compared to the youngest, with the 80+ speakers using the fewest inverted tokens. The results bear this out only partially. Inversion is the majority variant in all three groups, but while the youngest and middle cohorts pattern similarly, the oldest group uses inversion significantly less. This suggests that simplification does occur, but later in life than previously assumed. Simplification also emerges in the system of constraints governing variation. Random forest models reveal that the relative importance of factor groups remains stable across cohorts, with pragmatic context by far the most important predictor of variant choice. However, the strength of nearly every factor weakens with age, and the number of significant factors declines. This loss of significant predictors is another sign of simplification: older speakers appear to rely on fewer constraints when choosing between variants. The role of structural complexity also shifts over time. Among the youngest speakers, inversion is not avoided in complex contexts; in fact, multiclausal questions and expressed objects often favor it. But in the oldest group, hierarchies shift. Simpler environments begin to favor inversion, while more complex environments dampen it. This reversal suggests that older speakers mitigate processing costs by avoiding inversion in syntactically demanding contexts.

Taken together, these results show four manifestations of simplification: (1) reduced use of inversion in the oldest group, (2) weakening of constraint strength, (3) loss of significant predictors, and (4) reversal of hierarchies in complexity-related contexts. Importantly, simplification applies only to syntax-related factors. Pragmatic constraints remain strong and stable across all cohorts, continuing to dominate variant selection. Overall, these findings suggest that while the integrity of the system is maintained, speakers do gradually move toward a simplified variable grammar in later life, streamlining syntactically costly operations while leaving pragmatic control intact.

KEYNOTE #3: 9:40–10:20

Multimodal corpus-based studies of language development: A plea for *Lifespan Linguistics*

Lihe Huang, Tongji University

While language development unfolds across the entire lifespan, mainstream research has long focused on isolated age stages, fostering theoretical gaps that mask its continuous dynamics. To bridge this divide, we propose *Lifespan Linguistics*, a holistic framework rooted in Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), that leverages multimodal corpus-based methods to trace the interplay of biological, cognitive, and socioemotional influences over time. This paradigm facilitates detailed mapping and causal analysis of nonlinear trajectories from infancy to old age, laying the groundwork for evidence-based tools in screening, assessment, and intervention tailored to developmental norms. Moving beyond cross-sectional studies, this study develops an integrated, multimodal corpus-based framework that synergistically supports descriptive, explanatory, and applied research on lifespan language development. By capturing multimodal communication in ecological settings, this paradigm advances both theoretical understanding and practical applications for supporting language well-being across the life course.

PAPER #15: 10:40–11:00

Community sound changes in later life: Chronological age, speaker self-perception, and the realisation of New Zealand English short front vowels

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Lynn Clark, University of Canterbury
Megan McAuliffe, University of Canterbury

Variationist sociolinguistic analyses have historically focused on variation in teenage and young to middle-aged adult speech (Pichler et al., 2018). Conversely, clinical speech pathology and speech sciences have extensively studied older speakers (see, e.g., Tucker et al., 2021) but rarely consider the potential impact of community sound change on aging speech. Our understanding of how language variation and change manifests in the speech of older adults is, therefore, comparatively limited (though see Gertensberg & Lindholm, 2019; Hejná & Jespersen, 2022).

Here, we investigate whether older New Zealand English (NZE) speakers vary in their realisations of three monophthongs involved in a chain-shift (KIT, DRESS, TRAP) in NZE (e.g., Maclagan & Hay, 2007). We ask whether vowel realisations are conditioned by speaker gender, chronological and self-perceived age, social wellbeing, and/or physical functioning, predicting women, younger or younger-feeling speakers, and the more socially and physically active will be more innovative. The data come from sociolinguistic interviews with 27 New Zealanders aged 65-96 (men = 12, women = 15). Orthographic transcriptions were forced-aligned at the level of the phoneme in LaBB-CAT using an Automatic Speech Recognition tool (HMM Tool Kit) (Fromont, 2019). Midpoint F1 and F2 measures of KIT, DRESS, and TRAP tokens were then extracted, filtered and normalised following Hurring et al. (2025), resulting in 9551 stressed tokens.

We fit all tokens to a linear mixed effects models in R (R Core Team, 2024). The dependent variable was a composite F1/F2 measure (F2-2*(F1)). A higher measure corresponds to higher and fronter realisations in the vowel space (more innovative TRAP/DRESS, less innovative KIT). The fixed effects were: gender in interaction with chronological age, gender in interaction with perceived age, and measures of self-reported social wellbeing and physical functioning based on the SF-36 questionnaire (RAND, 1992). Vowel duration and following segment were included as linguistic controls. All listed fixed effects were then fit in interaction with vowel. Vowel duration was also included as a random slope on participant, with participant and word included as random intercepts.

The interaction between age, gender and vowel was significant for both chronological and perceived age. Women are innovative across age groups (higher and fronter DRESS and TRAP, lower and back KIT) (Figure 1). Men are less innovative as they age, with the age effect strongest for KIT. Men who report feeling younger than their age also favour more innovative realisations relative to men who report feeling their age. Finally, social wellbeing significantly interacts with vowel; speakers with higher self-reported wellbeing favour more innovative forms of all three vowels (Figure 2). The results provide evidence for the potential impact of social norms and self-perception on older speakers' vowel realisations.

The paper is relevant to the *corpus linguistics* thematic area because it is a sociophonetic corpus analysis of a dataset comprising older participants that utilises open- source and machine learning methodological

tools. The paper would also contribute to the overall conference theme because our results have implications for how both speakers and clinicians negotiate age-related changes in speech. Sound change can be an index of elder speakers' self-perception, and a potentially overlooked source of variation in clinical approaches to aging speech.

Figures

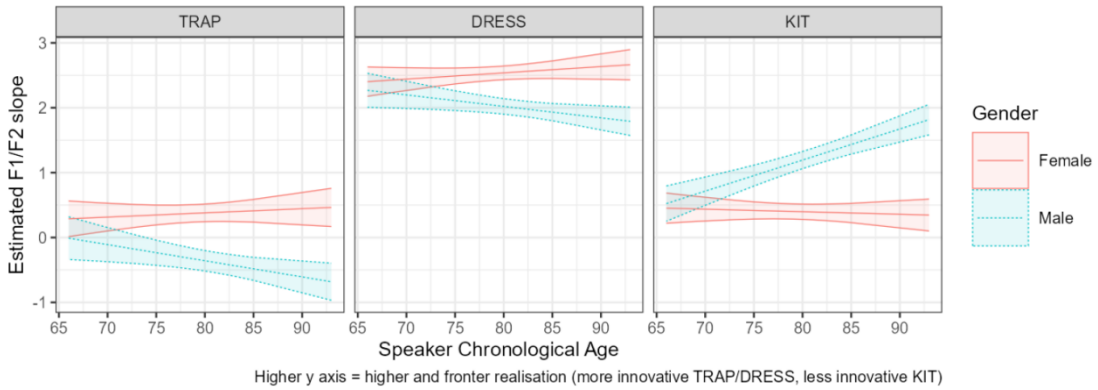

Figure 1 Estimated conditional F1/F2 slope by chronological age, gender and vowel

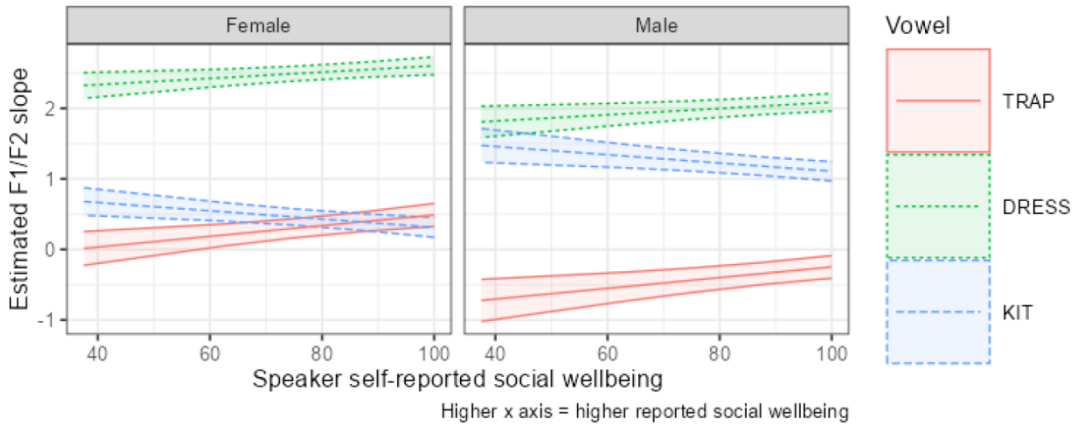

Figure 2 Estimated conditional F1/F2 slope by speaker self-reported wellbeing, gender and vowel

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PAPER #16: 11:00–11:20

Lexical characteristics and complexity of older bilingual heritage speakers in narrative production

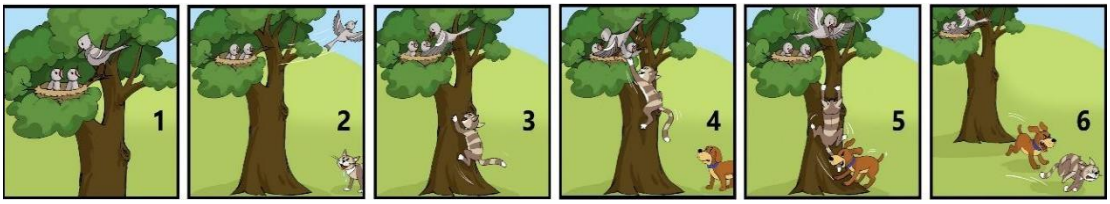
Irina Sekerina, City University of New York
Kisselev Olesya, University of South Carolina
Angelina Rubina, University of South Carolina
Aleksandra Skorobogatova, City University of New York

Heritage language (HL) speakers who are generally unbalanced bilinguals, weaker in their HL and dominant in the societal language (SL), have reduced exposure to the HL compared to both monolingual speakers and their own SL (Thordardottir, 2015). This reduced input may lead to lexical access difficulties (Gollan et al., 2008) and lower lexical diversity and complexity when compared to monolingual speakers (Nicoladis et al., 2023). At the same time, older speakers have also been shown to have richer lexical repertoires even than younger selves, as was shown by Gerstenberg (2015), who comparing various indices of lexical complexity in the interviews of older French speakers recorded a decade apart.

Whether lexical richness increases into old age or at least stays stable in older HL speakers is an open line of inquiry. The present study aims to provide a systematic description of the lexical characteristics and complexity of spoken narratives produced by older bilingual heritage speakers of Russian in Brazil. Specifically, we ask: (1) What are the patterns of lexical diversity, morphological richness, and word-level complexity in their HL production? (2) To what extent do these patterns reveal stability or variability across speakers?

Data come from 30 older adult participants (*Mage* = 76, *SD* = 7.7) from the BraPoRus corpus (Sekerina et al., 2023). Participants narrated the *Baby Birds* story from the Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives (MAIN; Gagarina et al., 2019, Fig. 1; Karl, 2023) in Russian. Narratives were audio-recorded, transcribed, and morphologically tagged in the CHAT format (TalkBank standards). Story structure score was *M*=11 (*SD*=2.1) out of possible 17.

Fig. 1



With the help of custom-built Python scripts, a set of lexical richness indices were extracted. Lexical measures included average token length, mean morpheme count, number of unique tokens and lemmas, and the Measure of Textual Lexical Diversity (MTLD) for both tokens and lemmas.Results (Table 1) indicate relatively uniform word-level complexity across participants (average token length = 4.98; mean morpheme count = 1.61), suggesting stable morphological structure. In contrast, lexical diversity measures

displayed considerable variability (unique tokens: *M* = 261.7, *SD* = 88.1; MTLD by tokens = 83.7, *SD* = 15.3), reflecting individual differences in productive vocabulary.

These findings point to shared morphological constraints but heterogeneous lexical repertoires among older HL speakers, underscoring diverse trajectories of lexical maintenance and attrition. Comparative analyses with HL child corpora (TalkBank) and monolingual older adults (RUEG, Wiese et al., 2019) are underway to contextualize these patterns across age and dominance profiles and provide a comparative lens in answering research questions posed above.

Table 1

Lexical Metric	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Average Token Length	4.98	0.20	4.60	5.38
Average Morpheme Count	1.61	0.06	1.51	1.72
Unique Tokens	261.71	88.12	165.00	490.00
Unique Lemmas (lemma+POS)	214.42	68.11	134.00	393.00
Type-Token Ratio by Tokens (MTLD)	83.71	15.33	55.74	114.00
MTLD by Lemmas	49.31	7.33	35.93	63.83
# of Utterances	15.44	9.29	3.0	57

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PAPER #17: 11:20–11:40

Lexical networks modeling of the mental lexicon of older bilingual heritage speakers

Irina A. Sekerina, City University of New York
Donnan Gravelle, City University of New York

Heritage Speakers (HSs) who acquired a heritage (HL) and a societal language (SL) exhibit high variability in lexical proficiency in HL, in contrast to their native SL. In the present study, we assessed the older HSs of Russian (M_{age} = 76, *SD* = 7.7) whose SL is Brazilian Portuguese (BP) from the BraPoRus corpus (Sekerina et al., 2023) in productive vocabulary and conducted a lexical network analysis of their linguistic background and lexical proficiency.

In the usual lexical network approach (e.g., Kovács et al., 2021), words are nodes and the links between words called edges are some relation that the words share. It is a useful representation of relational data, complete with statistics tailored for complex systems. However, little work has used this method to characterize language users as nodes, the approach we have taken for our 32 HSs of Russian (20 female, 12 male). We constructed clusters of language users based on shared vocabulary as edges. To obtain the participants' lexical knowledge, they were asked to name one image in Russian among 4 in 192 PowerPoint slides. Their naming responses were marked as correct/incorrect. The overall accuracy across the items was 68.6%.

To construct a shared vocabulary network, we calculated the proportion of responses that each pair of participants got correct. Each pair of participants that were able to name at more than 50% of the same items received an edge. That is, edges in the network represent a greater than chance probability of knowing the same words. 6 participants did not have any links and were dropped from the analysis. The resulting network had 26 nodes and 236 edges (Fig. 1).

To determine the number of distinct vocabularies in the network, we used latent space cluster modeling (Handcock et al., 2007), which performs model-based clustering of nodes in a network in a latent space, which can be interpreted as a type of "vocabulary space". We identified two distinct clusters in the model (Fig. 2). To identify what factors influence cluster membership, we fit a linear regression predicting category membership probability using the following variables: Age of arrival (or being born) in Brazil, their performance on the *MiniMental State Examination-2* (Folstein et al., 2010), a digit span task, and the number of overall naming errors. Of these predictors, only the age of arrival to Brazil was significant (b = –0.05, *SE* = 0.02, p = .048), suggesting that vocabulary communities may arise due to longer experience with the heritage language and culture. Cluster 1 (n=10) was characterized by the words from the core vocabulary (e.g., *klej* 'glue', *eskimo* 'popsicle ice cream'). Cluster 2 (n=12) contained more borrowings and lower frequency words (e.g., *mol'bert* 'easel', *shurup* 'screw'). Notably, the insignificant effect of error rates suggests that vocabulary communities do not simply arise due to one cluster making more mistakes or knowing more words, nor are communities a result of cognitive factors.

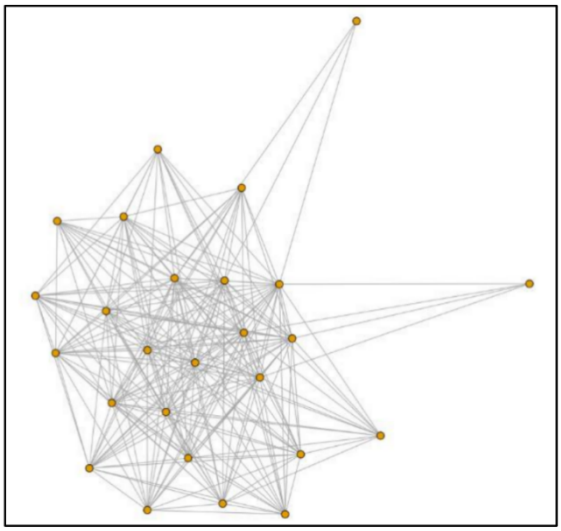

Fig. 1. Network depicting participants (nodes) and shared vocabulary (edges).

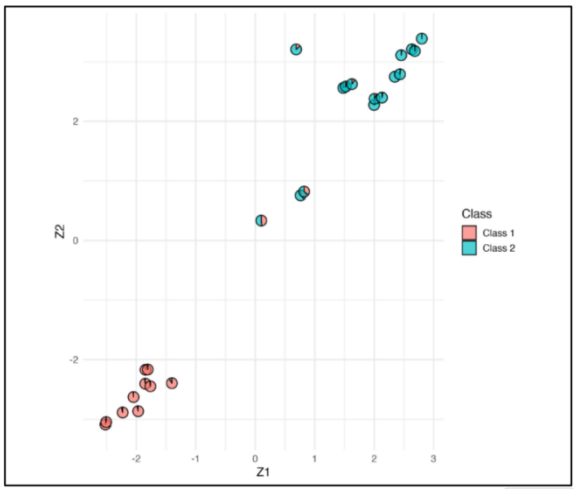

Fig. 2. Latent positions of participants. Pie charts represent the probability of participants' class membership.

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PAPER #18: 11:40–12:00

Aging voices in AI-supported ASR

Annette Gerstenberg, University of Potsdam
Michaela Hejná, Aarhus University

Older voices are known to present challenges for Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) systems (Aman, Frédéric and Vacher, Michel and Rossato, Solange and Portet, François 2012; Kwon, Kim and Choeh 2016). Recent projects have compiled data sets that allow for the training of models on older voices (Fukuda u. a. 2023). These problems continue to persist in the age of ASR systems that use Artificial Intelligence (AI), as the underlying models perform best when Transcribing standard varieties (Graham and Roll 2024). Beyond the technical challenges of improving AI-supported ASR systems from older speakers, these shortcomings reveal the existing biases of generative AI, and the need for data of older speakers (Kuhn u. a. 2023). Linguistically, AI-supported ASR systems such as Whisper (Radford u. a. 2022) represent the standard of written language; recent projects propose models trained to verbatim transcriptions, and accurate word-level timestamps (CrisperWhisper, nyra health on GitHub), however, not available for French. In our talk, we present a model trained on a corpus of older speakers of hexagonal French and evaluate its performance with regard to speakers' age. Data used in this study are from LangAge corpora project (El Sherbiny Ismail u. a. 2022) and include individuals experiencing normal aging, using sociolinguistic interviews (Gerstenberg 2011). The data set include a first series of interviews (2005), and repeated interviews in 2012, 2015, 2023, resulting in a longitudinal data base. Situated in the city of Orléans (France), this hexagonal French data set reflects standard spoken French. Orléans is also the place where the initiative of Étude Sociolinguistique sur Orléans (ESLO) started in 1968 (ESLO1, Bergounioux, Baraduc and Dumont 1992), and has continued since 2008 (Baude and Dugua 2011). The resulting corpus provides control data from the same speech community, for younger age groups. The training corpus includes 114 mostly retired French speakers, and sums up to 655 179 tokens (meanAge=80, medianAge=81, sdAge=9.3). The orthograpic transcription follows LangAge transcription guide (Gerstenberg u. a. 2018), e. g. closed list of interjections, false starts marked, hesitations marked, time-aligned XML format (Transcriber). The evaluation of the newly finetuned model, based on Word Error Rate (WER), and notorious issues such as spurious repetitions, highlights the impact of the chronological age of the speakers, as compared to other sociolinguistic factors such as gender, or education. We explore the potential causes of better or worse ASR performance, based on previous findings, focusing on prosodic features potentially affecting AI-supported ASR performance, such as stability vs. variability (reflected in the standard deviation of fundamental frequency and intensity), articulation rate, the presence of fillers, and parameters of voice quality (Fuchs, Koenig and Gerstenberg 2021). Going further, we discuss age-related changes in voice and speech production in the broader context of the social representation of older age groups (Bilodeau-Mercure and Tremblay 2016; Hejná and Jespersen 2022).

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POSTER #1: 13:30–15:30

Beyond deixis: Demonstrative-based discourse markers as compensatory strategies in Chinese elderly conversation

Jiale Ding, Zhejiang University

Research on language and aging shows that older adults across languages employ compensatory strategies to cope with communicative challenges, particularly lexical retrieval difficulties and the maintenance of discourse cohesion (Burke & Shafto, 2008; Shafto & Tyler, 2014). Such strategies are well documented in studies of English and German, where speakers draw on grammatical and pragmatic resources to sustain interaction (Horton et al., 2010; Schröder et al., 2012). In contrast, research on Chinese elderly discourse is limited and largely qualitative, focusing on broader pragmatic aspects such as politeness, turn-taking, or narrative style (Guo, 2017; Huang & Che, 2023; Tsai, 2023; Xu, 2019). This leaves a key gap in understanding how specific grammaticalized forms, particularly Mandarin demonstratives, may serve as compensatory resources for managing cognitive-communicative demands in later life.

A key development in pragmatics and discourse studies is the growing focus on demonstrative based discourse markers (DDMs), which are grammaticalized forms that play critical roles in interaction management, stance taking, and online speech monitoring (Rhee, 2023). Unlike English demonstratives, which mainly function as pronouns or determiners (Lyons, 1999; Levinson, 2004), Mandarin demonstratives have undergone grammaticalization (Huang, 1999; Cui, 2018) and extended into a wide range of discourse functions (Tao, 1999; Fang, 2002; Yang, 2023).This functional expansion raises the question of how elderly speakers draw on demonstrative-based constructions not only for deixis and reference but also for discourse management and the mitigation of cognitive load.

Based on Accessibility Theory (Ariel, 1990) and the Givenness Hierarchy (Gundel et al., 1993), this study investigates the role of Mandarin demonstratives as accessibility-management devices in conversations among older adults. Incorporating perspectives from cognitive aging research (Burke & Shafto, 2008), we examine how these forms facilitate reference resolution, stance expression, hesitation, repair, and narrative structuring. The analysis draws on a corpus of 110 semi-structured conversations between older adult, (Chen et al., 2025), in which participants discussed life memories and daily routines. Methodologically, we adopt an integrated framework combining corpus linguistics, conversation analysis, and multidimensional analysis (Biber, 1988). Demonstrative constructions were automatically extracted and analyzed for collocational patterns, while prosodic and hesitation features were systematically annotated. Mixed-effects regression modeling was employed to identify core functional patterns while controlling for individual variation.

Preliminary analyses show three main patterns of demonstrative use in elderly speech. First, linking–evaluation forms help speakers show stance and summarize shared memories. Second, vagueness–hesitation–repair forms appear with pauses, repetitions, and self-repairs, showing word-finding difficulty and helping communication. Third, temporal–spatial forms give time and place cues that organize stories. Together, these patterns suggest that Mandarin demonstratives do more than point or link ideas—they help manage reference and thinking load. This study contributes to Chinese pragmatics and aging communication research by providing a detailed look at how zhè and nà constructions work in different

discourse contexts. It also highlights the importance of language-specific grammatical devices for adaptive communication.

POSTER #2: 13:30–15:30

Does foreign language learning improve executive functions in older adults? A three-level meta-analysis

Nan Zhang, Tongji University

To investigate the effects of late-life foreign language learning on executive function (EF), a three-level meta-analysis was conducted on 20 studies (63 effect sizes) identified through rigorous systematic search criteria. The results showed that late-life foreign language learning produced a small but significant improvement in EF ($g = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). The improvement effect on EF was significantly moderated by linguistic distance and cognitive status: greater linguistic distance was associated with more pronounced cognitive gains; foreign language learning yielded stronger improvements in older adults with cognitive impairment than in healthy older adults. Conversely, the moderating effects of learning duration, learning intensity, control group type, and specific EF subcomponents were non-significant. Furthermore, the findings provide stronger empirical support for the processing complexity hypothesis over the interference inhibition hypothesis, aligning more closely with the Bilingual Executive Processing Advantage (BEPA) hypothesis rather than the Bilingual Inhibitory Control Advantage (BICA) hypothesis. This study provides a basis for developing low-cost, non-pharmacological cognitive interventions and establishes a foundation for exploring language learning and its cognitive effects across the lifespan.

POSTER #3: 13:30–15:30

Accessing lifelong multilingualism in later life

Aldona Rzitki, University of Bern

This talk introduces a new timeline-based visual-elicitation method designed to capture multilingualism as a dynamic, lifelong process. Twelve older adults were invited to map their individual language trajectories along a self-designed timeline without predetermined categories or constraints. Each visualisation was accompanied by a recorded oral commentary, resulting in a multimodal dataset combining graphic and narrative dimensions. The analysis reveals how participants structure their multilingual histories through temporal, emotional, and experiential markers, foregrounding turning points such as migration, education, loss, or reactivation of languages. The method proves to be both low-threshold and deeply reflective, enabling participants to take epistemic authorship of their language biographies. It offers a powerful tool for research on later-life multilingualism and biographical language practices.

POSTER #4: 13:30–15:30

Age-related shifts between prosodic and semantic dominance in emotion perception show emotion-specific effects and associations with general cognition

Yi Lin, Shanghai Jiao Tong University
Shumeng Ni, Shanghai Jiao Tong University
Yangfan Lu, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Prior research extensively documented challenges in recognizing verbal and nonverbal emotion among older individuals when compared with younger counterparts. However, the nature of these age-related changes remains unclear. The present study investigated how older and younger adults comprehend four basic emotions (namely anger, happiness, neutrality, and sadness) conveyed through verbal (semantic) and nonverbal (facial and prosodic) channels. A total of 73 (43 women) older adults and 74 younger adults (37 women) partook in a fixed-choice test for recognizing emotions presented visually via facial expressions or auditorily through prosody or semantics. The results confirmed age-related decline in recognizing emotions across all channels except for identifying happy facial expressions. Furthermore, the two age groups demonstrated both commonalities and disparities in their inclinations towards specific channels. While both groups displayed a shared dominance of visual facial cues over auditory emotional signals, older adults indicated a preference for semantics whereas younger adults displayed a preference for prosody in auditory emotion perception. Notably, the dominance effects observed in older adults for visual and semantic cues were less pronounced for sadness and anger compared to other emotions. These challenges in emotion recognition and the shifts in channel preferences among older adults were correlated with their general cognitive capabilities. Together, the findings underscore that age-related obstacle in perceiving emotions and alterations in channel dominance, which vary by emotional category, are significantly intertwined with overall cognitive functioning.

POSTER #5: 13:30–15:30

Reviewing a niche: Insights from empirical studies on multilingualism and dementia

Katrin Karl, University of Bern
Carolin Schneider Ward, University of Duisburg-Essen
Aldona Rzitki, University of Bern

European and Western societies are increasingly shaped by migration and multilingualism, demographic change, and rising life expectancy. These dynamics lead to a growing number of older adults who live with multilingual repertoires and are at heightened risk of age-related diseases. Dementia stands out among these conditions due to its high prevalence and profound societal impact. As an umbrella term for several neurodegenerative syndromes, dementia entails a gradual decline in cognitive abilities, including language. This decline is influenced by disease subtype, health status, and social integration, while the role of other factors remains contested. Language is central in two respects: it underpins diagnosis—through standardized tests and linguistic markers of different subtypes—and it structures social participation, where changes in communicative behavior may contribute to isolation and accelerate decline. Preserving and mobilizing multiple languages is therefore crucial for individuals, their networks, and society. Against this backdrop, consolidating findings on multilingualism and dementia is essential for establishing a robust empirical basis and advancing our understanding of how aging and communication intersect.

This study presents the first systematic review of empirical research on multilingualism and dementia. Its aims are to provide an overview of existing work, map imbalances in coverage, and surface unanswered questions. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, with adaptations to linguistics-specific conventions, we searched five databases (Scopus, PubMed, Web of Science, JSTOR, and the Bibliography of Linguistic Literature Database) for the period 2000–March 2025. The initial search yielded 5,648 records. After de-duplication and multi-stage screening, 26 studies met the inclusion criteria.

The synthesis identifies four thematic clusters. First, studies on language performance trajectories examine lexical access, verbal fluency, and maintenance versus decline across L1, L2, and additional languages. Findings highlight the role of dominance and acquisition history while cautioning against overgeneralization from narrow samples, such as claims that all languages decline in parallel. Second, interactional practices in everyday and care contexts are documented through conversation analysis and ethnography, showing how people living with dementia and carers navigate word searches, repair, code-switching, and the strategic use of multilingual resources. Third, studies on language accessibility and activation investigate when dominant or non-dominant languages are available or inaccessible, and how this fluctuates across dementia stages. Finally, care training and communicative strategies constitute an emerging area, exploring how multilingual carers adapt their practices and how linguistic awareness enhances care quality.

At the same time, the review exposes significant gaps. Later stages of dementia are rarely studied, language pairings are unevenly represented, and bilingual profiles are skewed toward early, high-proficiency speakers. Late bilinguals and those with uneven proficiency remain largely absent.

The review also reflects on the methodological challenges of conducting systematic reviews in small interdisciplinary niches. Conventional approaches often fail to capture perspectives that foreground interaction and identity. Tailored inclusion criteria and keywording are required to prevent relevant studies from remaining invisible. In sum, this review consolidates existing research about multilingualism and dementia while highlighting imbalances and unanswered questions, mapping out future steps for the field.

POSTER #6: 13:30–15:30

Autobiographical memory and linguistic features of autobiographical narratives in Chinese older adults with amnestic mild cognitive impairment

Quan Yao, Tongji University

Objective: This study investigates autobiographical memory and linguistic features in the production of autobiographical narratives by older adults with amnestic mild cognitive impairment (aMCI), with particular attention to how memory measures were associated with lexical diversity and semantic coherence.

Methods: Spoken autobiographical narratives were elicited from 27 Mandarin-speaking older adults with aMCI and 27 cognitively unimpaired controls. Autobiographical memory was assessed using the Autobiographical Memory Interview (AMI), and narrative details were coded following the Autobiographical Interview (AI) protocol. Narratives were transcribed and segmented into internal and external detail subcategories. Natural language processing methods were used to quantify lexical diversity, part-of-speech composition, and semantic coherence.

Results: Compared with controls, individuals with aMCI showed significantly lower personal semantic memory (PSM) and autobiographical episodic memory (AEM) scores. Only AEM showed a significant life-period effect, with higher scores for early adulthood than for recent life. Episodic specificity, indexed by the proportion of internal details, was also reduced in the aMCI group, but showed a different temporal pattern from AEM, with a recency effect. Within internal details, the group difference was primarily driven by reduced event details. Within external details, aMCI narratives contained more extended episodes and repetitive details. In contrast, the overall part-of-speech composition of autobiographical narratives was largely preserved across groups. At the lexical-semantic level, the aMCI group showed reduced lexical diversity and higher centroid-based global coherence than controls. Repetitive detail proportion was strongly negatively associated with lexical diversity and moderately positively associated with centroid-based global coherence. AEM scores were moderately positively associated with lexical diversity and strongly negatively associated with centroid-based global coherence.

Discussion: These findings suggest that autobiographical narrative impairment in aMCI involves not only reduced episodic recall, but also compromised personal semantic memory and altered lexical-semantic organization during narrative production. Temporal distribution patterns varied across autobiographical memory dimensions and were further modulated by cognitive impairment status. Decreased event details and increased extended episodes reflect overgenerality of autobiographical recall in aMCI, characterized by a shift from specific episodic construction toward more generalized or extended event representations. This pattern may be compatible with partial semanticization of autobiographical retrieval, although some extended episodes may also correspond to long-term experiences or cultural life scripts with high personal significance. Moreover, increased repetitive details, reduced lexical diversity, and elevated centroid-based global coherence point to a convergent pattern of reduced semantic dispersion or constrained semantic exploration in aMCI.

PAPER #19: 15:50–16:10

Speech fluency as a marker of cognitive decline

Nadezhda Psaryova, Center for Language and Brain, HSE University
Arina Zvereva, Center for Language and Brain, HSE University
Svetlana Malyutina, Center for Language and Brain, HSE University

This study investigates the relationship between spontaneous speech fluency and cognitive performance, measured by the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA), in a cohort of 298 elderly Russian-speaking adults without diagnosed dementia. Building on preliminary analyses of 93 participants, which suggested correlations between speech disfluency patterns and cognitive status, we expand the scope with a larger dataset and a more sophisticated methodological framework. Our research focuses on identifying which speech fluency parameters - including silent and filled pauses, repetitions, self-corrections, false starts, and lengthenings - are most informative for predicting MoCA scores and for classifying participants into groups with cognitive decline vs. no cognitive decline, operationalized using a MoCA cut-off of 25.

A novel aspect of this work is the fine-grained linguistic annotation of disfluencies, particularly the detailed analysis of speech fluency parameters` positions at part-of-speech, syntactic, and discourse levels and moving beyond global quantitative metrics (e.g., overall frequency and duration of pauses). Participants provided spontaneous speech samples in the form of personal narratives, which were manually transcribed and annotated using ELAN software. The initial linguistic inventory includes approximately 2000 parameters, which are reduced via preprocessing and feature selection.

In the n=93 stage, we observed that lower MoCA scores correlated with longer silent pauses, especially preceding clausal units, and fewer and shorter filled pauses, suggesting reduced compensatory strategies during lexical retrieval and potential difficulties in sentence planning (Cossavella, 2021; Gayraud, 2011). However, regression models that accounted for demographic and clinical covariates, including depression scores, indicated that depression was a stronger predictor of cognitive status than linguistic features alone. In the ongoing full-sample analysis, we combine traditional statistical models (e.g., linear/logistic regression with covariates) with supervised machine-learning approaches for prediction and classification. For interpretability we use SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) to quantify the contribution of individual features and feature groups (by linguistic level). This design allows us to test whether the patterns noted in the partial sample replicate in the completed dataset and to identify which disfluency types and positional contexts provide the most informative, explainable signal of cognitive variation.

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PAPER #20: 16:10–16:30

Clustering characteristics in verbal fluency tasks as markers of cognitive decline in the elderly

Ekaterina Rodionova, Center for Language and Brain, HSE University
Nikita Cherkasov, Center for Language and Brain, HSE University
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Early detection of cognitive impairment (CI) at the stages of subjective cognitive decline (SCD) and mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is essential for timely intervention, which could delay the onset of dementia. However, there are not many tasks that are sensitive enough to detect emerging CI. Among them, language measures might become a window to subtle cognitive changes. Some of them are already used in clinical practice, such as the verbal fluency (VF) task. It consists in naming as many words belonging to the same semantic category (semantic VF, SVF) or starting with the same sound (phonetic VF, PVF) as possible in one minute. The task draws on lexical retrieval (Shao et al., 2014) and semantic memory (van den Berg et al., 2024). However, only the total number of correct words is typically analysed as a predictor of CI. Thus, among linguists, there remains an ongoing search for possible ways to leverage linguistic theory and methodology to improve sensitivity of VF.

This study aimed to investigate whether incorporating linguistic characteristics based on word clustering into the analysis of PVF and SVF would enhance differentiation between SCD and MCI or prediction of MoCA scale (Nasreddine et al., 2005) score. To achieve that, a total of 251 PVF and SVF response transcripts along with MoCA assessment results were collected from 127 elderly Russian speakers with either SCD or MCI. The responses were automatically analysed to distinguish clusters, which are defined as two or more words that are similar in their sound (phonetic clusters, PC) or meaning (semantic clusters, SC). SC were identified via cosine distance method (Woods et al., 2016), and PC were identified via common-biphone score method (Ryan et al., 2013). Then, clustering characteristics – number of clusters, number of switches, mean cluster size, first cluster size – were calculated.

For each task type, two linear mixed effects models were built to predict total MoCA score or diagnostic group (SCD/MCI): the first model included only total word count as a predictor, whereas the second model also included clustering characteristics. The analysis showed that the SVF model with clustering characteristics improved differentiation between SCD and MCI ($\chi^2(4)=12.65$, $p=0.013$) but did not enhance the prediction of the total MoCA score. As for PVF, no significant improvement was found, neither for diagnostic group nor total MoCA score. Among clustering characteristics, lower mean phonetic cluster size showed significant associations with lower total MoCA score in both tasks (PVF: $\beta = 0.328$, $p = 0.043$, SVF: $\beta = 0.246$, $p = 0.046$).

Thus, longer phonetic clusters in VF task might indicate cognitive function preservation. This finding suggests lexical access reorganisation in CI, namely, mediation of semantic retrieval by phonetic proximity. Therefore, accounting for clustering characteristics of VF allowed to gain insight into cognitive processes in cognitive decline and to improve the differentiation between SCD and MCI by capturing subtle cognitive

reorganisation that might be missed in traditional assessment. Clustering characteristics could thus be included into automated assessment instruments to enhance early CI detection.

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PAPER #21: 16:30–16:50

Old rules, new symbols: Sociolinguistic patterns of emoji and punctuation use in later life

Lara Baert, University of Antwerp, Belgium
Reinhild Vandekerckhove, University of Antwerp, Belgium
Sarah Bernolet, University of Antwerp, Belgium
Astrid De Wit, University of Antwerp, Belgium

While digital communication is often associated with younger generations, older adults are increasingly active on platforms like WhatsApp (Craft, 2024). Yet, these "digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001) remain underrepresented in (socio)linguistic research on social media literacy. This study addresses that gap by examining a prototypical feature of the medium, emoji use, and its interaction with punctuation in seniors' WhatsApp conversations.

Although emoji use has been argued to decline with age (e.g. Oleszkiewicz et al., 2017), little is known about the factors influencing older adults' emoji frequency. Equally underexplored ishow they integrate emojis and punctuation in their online writing. Emoji-punctuation patterns can offer insights into seniors' linguistic practices and their capacity to adopt and adapt to linguistic novelties. While "cognitive aging and entrenchment" have been posited as constraints on grammatical innovation (Petré & Van de Velde, 2018: 894), other research suggests that linguistic adaptation remains possible throughout life (Anthonissen & Petré, 2019). This raises key questions: to what extent do older adults use emojis to mark message boundaries, and how consistently do they maintain traditional punctuation? And is there a trade-off between the two?

Beyond expressing emotions, emojis can serve various functions, including marking phrase, sentence, and message boundaries. Spina (2019) focused on this structural function and found that younger Twitter users often substituted punctuation with emoticons, whereas older users were more inclined to combine them. When the two co-occurred, punctuation typically preceded the emoticon. However, Spina's participant pool (16-67 years, M = 31.65) suggests an overrepresentation of younger generations.

Our corpus comprises intragenerational WhatsApp conversations among 142 participants aged 65-90, totaling over 89,000 chat messages (+1.3M tokens). All participants are from Flanders (northern Belgium) and communicate in Flemish Dutch. Using generalized mixed models, we tested demographic and message-characteristic variables while controlling for participant variation.

Results show that punctuation-only endings dominate (61.3%), followed by no closure symbols (17.1%), emoji-only endings (8.8%), and emoji-punctuation combinations (7.9%). Notably, men were more likely than women to combine an emoji with punctuation. Where such "intensified punctuation" (Spina, 2019: 347) enhances the expressivity of the message, this stands in contrast to prior findings that women typically employ more expressive markers (e.g., Hilte et al., 2019). However, the current finding may instead suggest that women have adapted more fully to genre conventions by replacing punctuation with an emoji rather than combining the two. Sentence length also conditioned closure strategies: shorter final sentences more often ended with an emoji (alone or combined), longer ones with only punctuation. This suggests that older adults adopt social media conventions and use emojis pragmatically (cf. Pappert, 2017), mitigating potential

ambiguity in brief messages. Finally, overall emoji frequency showed no main gender effect, but gender interacted both with age and WhatsApp experience: emoji use increased among men but decreased among women.

By highlighting these practices, our study contributes to understanding linguistic flexibility in later life. In doing so, we acknowledge the agency of older generations in new media, fostering a more inclusive approach to digital literacy. Further implications for follow-up work will be discussed in greater detail during the conference.

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FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026

FRIDAY **ONLINE**

PAPER #22: 9:00–9:20

More than just words: Topic shift in conversations with people living with dementia

Boyd Davis, UNC Charlotte
Meredith Troutman-Jordan, UNC Charlotte
Margaret Maclagan, Canterbury University

Our goal in this study has been to identify and explore topic shift as a crucial part of topic maintenance in conversations with people living with dementia (PLWD). Topic shift is more than just changing words. In conversations with PLWD, particularly in moderate, late moderate or later dementias, the PLWD will appear to suddenly shift the topic being discussed. This disconcerts their neurotypical conversation partner, and can stop the conversation or slow it down, as the non-demented partner tries to return to the previous topic or restart the conversation in some way. Frequently the partner will informally view the PLWD as impolite and increasingly deficient in language and therefore will ascribe lower abilities to the speaker. Hall et al (2018) assert that when supported by their partners, PLWD "retain" topic management, but we note that often means staying with topics introduced by the non-demented partner Often, the partner has been acting as responsible for or in control of the interaction, focusing on questioning and question-word interrogatives which are designed to pull information from the speaker with dementia (Couper-Kuhlen, Selting, 2018:231. This approach does not always work with PLWD, as seen in observations of doctors with patient who are PLWD (Huang-Davis 2025: 121-125) and may even act as a trigger for topic shift. As Guendouzi (2023) reminds us, the skewed pragmatics of similar interactions may be the result of the neurotypical partner's expectations for community norms to be in operation for all conversationalists (p. 255) but the PLWD may "no longer remember or recognize the cues (e.g., people, environmental stimuli, or key words) that help to contextualize their daily interactions" (p. 257). Maclagan-Davis (2019:472) offer and explore an interaction in a conversation that had run out of things to say about baked potatoes: "Int: Yeah, I like having a nice warm baked potato in the winter, but not anymore [laughs]. LG: Oh yeah! [laughs]. Mother would always ask us what kind of cake we wanted in this particular situation, she is re-positioning herself as a daughter in a family: she is both in the present, looking back at her mother, and in the past, answering as the child she had been." We find that the just-quoted (anonymized) speaker with dementia has not misunderstood words or phrases. Her topic shift goes beyond words or phrases. Instead, the PLWD has taken the opportunity to change perspective on the conversational situation, orientation to the discussion and here, presenting a different facet of her identity. We illustrate this exchange and offer brief explanation of this as one of our scenarios in our digital 7-language sets of Graphic Caregiver Guides and are currently undergoing review of this particular scenario from professional, paraprofessional, and family caregivers. These sets of twenty-two single-page scenarios (if print-out is desired) illustrate two caregivers discussing common situations that arise in dementia care. They are used for caregiver training (Davis, Maclagan, Troutman-Jordan 2025) and are downloadable online. at the Library of the University of Canterbury.

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KEYNOTE #4: 9:20–10:00

Beyond Accuracy: Age-Inclusive Equity Considerations for AI Medical Scribes

Allison Koenecke, Cornell University

Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) has transformed daily tasks ranging from video captioning to medical note-taking. ASR systems' growing use warrants robust and standardized auditing approaches to ensure automated transcriptions are of high and equitable quality, and to quantify concerns such as AI-generated hallucinations. We identify three pitfalls in existing standard ASR auditing procedures, and demonstrate how addressing them impacts audit results via a case study focused on patients with a language disorder, aphasia, which disproportionately impacts older patients. We further discuss a path forward in the auditing landscape for AI medical scribes.

PAPER #23: 10:00–10:20

Aging affects short and long-term cumulative priming effects for language production

Minli Wang, Xi'an Jiaotong University
Min Wang, Zhejiang University
Julie E. Boland, University of Michigan

The persistence of structural priming as indicated by cumulative priming effects is generally attributed to implicit learning. However, it remains open whether older adults, whose implicit learning ability is prone to age-related declines, demonstrate cumulative priming effects in language production.

We investigated both short and long-term cumulative priming effects in young (N=50, M_{age}=21.7) and older (N=52, M_{age}=75.2) adults' sentence production in Mandarin Chinese. The experiment consisted of a baseline phase, an exposure phase, an immediate posttest and a delayed posttest after a one-week interval (see Fig 1). Participants of both age groups were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions, wherein the motion event structures they were exposed to were manipulated. In the canonical priming condition, participants described animations by completing preambles leading to the canonical Chinese motion structure with serial verbs encoding the manner and the path of the motion respectively (Example a in Table 1). In the non-canonical priming condition, preambles led participants to produce the non-canonical Chinese motion structure, which encodes the motion path in the main verb and the motion manner in a subject modifier (Example b in Table 1). A norming study confirmed that the non-canonical path structure was unfamiliar to both age groups.

Both age groups demonstrated short-term cumulative priming effects. After the non-canonical primes, both young and older participants produced significantly more path verb structures in the immediate posttest compared to the baseline (Young: estimate=3.00, *SE*=0.86, $p<.001$; Older: estimate=0.91, *SE*=0.45, $p<.05$; see Fig 2a). Similarly, more serial verb structures were produced after the canonical primes (estimate=1.67, *SE*=0.35, $p<.001$; see Fig 2b). Moreover, the short-term cumulative priming in both age groups exhibited the inverse frequency effect, as the increase in the non-canonical structure from the baseline to the immediate posttest in the non-canonical priming condition was more marked than that of the canonical structure in the canonical priming condition. Nevertheless, the inverse frequency effect was less pronounced in older adults. In addition, the long-term cumulative priming effect for the canonical structure was observed in both age groups (estimate=1.23, *SE*=0.33, $p<.001$; see Fig 2b). However, for the non-canonical structure, only young adults retained the priming effect in the delayed posttest conducted one week later (Young: estimate=1.71, *SE*=0.79, $p<.05$; Older: estimate=-2.70, *SE*=1.28, $p<.05$; see Fig 2a).

These findings indicate that aging affects short and long-term cumulative priming effects for the production of non-canonical structures. Older adults were less likely to update their prior acquired knowledge (i.e., highly entrenched serial verbs) to align with the newly learned statistics (i.e., path verbs), which could be attributed to age-related declines in implicit learning ability. Crucially, by controlling for variations in participants' prior experience of the structure, that is, both age groups are equally unfamiliar with the non-canonical structures, the study lends strong support to implicit learning being an important contributing mechanism to structural priming.

Figure 1: Overview of the experiment

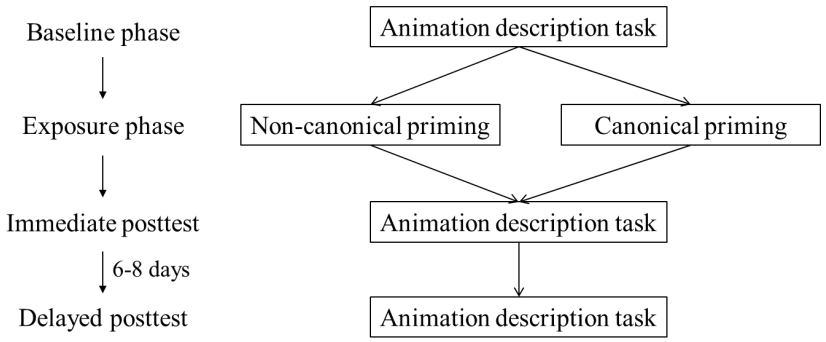

Figure 2: Production of different types of motion event structures across conditions: a) under non-canonical priming, the proportion of the path verb constructions in different phases and age groups; b) under canonical priming, the proportion of the serial verb constructions in different phases and age groups.

a) Non-canonical Priming b) Canonical Priming

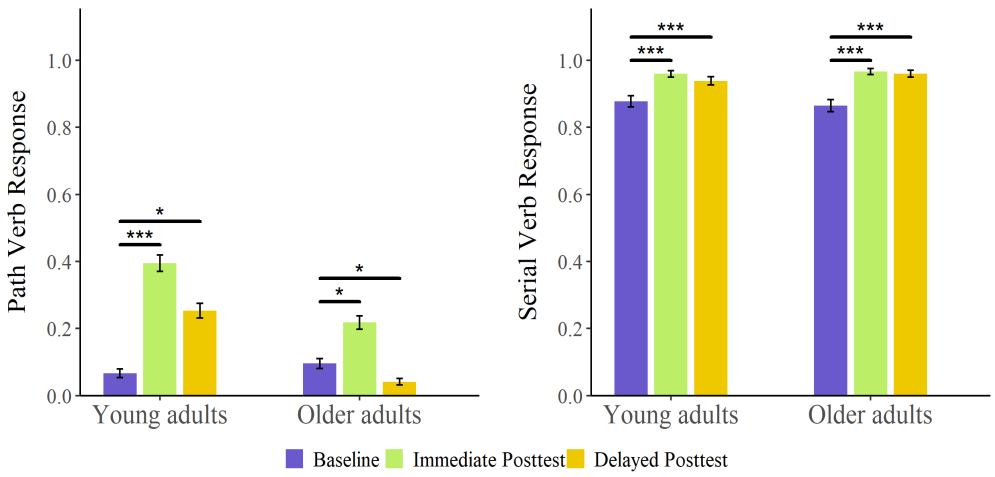

Table 1: Examples of prime sentences

a) The canonical construction (the serial verb construction)

e.g., xiaonanhai kaizhe feiji kaojin le yunceng

"The boy FLEW an aircraft into the clouds"

b) The non-canonical construction (the path verb construction)

e.g., feiji li de xiaonanhai kaojin le yunceng

"The boy in an aircraft APPROACHED the clouds"

Note: In the case of expressing both manner and path components of motion, Chinese speakers characteristically prefer to encode manner information in the first verb (e.g., *kai* in the example a) and path

information in the second verb (e.g., *kaojin* in the example a). Manner encoded in the subject modifier (e.g., *feiji* in the example b) and path in the single verb (e.g., *kaojin* in the example b) are not in their preferred structural locations, though the syntactic structure is licit.

KEYNOTE #5: 10:40–11:20

From biology to biography and back again: How age emerges in the sounds of speech

Michaela Hejná, Aarhus University

We often assume that we can hear age in the voice. But what, precisely, are we hearing? Is vocal age a matter of our biological trajectory, a reflection of social life history, or an effect of listener expectations and cultural ideologies? In this talk, I argue that age in speech is not reducible to any single level of such explanations but instead presents a combination of these three aspects.

Drawing on work in phonetics and sociolinguistics, I propose that vocal age emerges through the interaction of physiological change, biographical trajectory, stylistic practice, and listener positioning. I reflect on a large-scale project designed to disentangle biological and social ageing in speech production, and discuss the conceptual and methodological challenges such work reveals. I then turn to media and celebrity speech to show how agelects are performed, stylised, and commodified, and to analyses of vocal ageism in popular culture to demonstrate how older voices are evaluated and hierarchised. I will also highlight a striking gap in several related (sub)fields: the near absence of research on how listener age shapes perceptions of vocal age.

I conclude by proposing an integrated model of vocal ageing that moves from biology to biography, and back again, situating age not as a property of the voice alone, but as an emergent phenomenon shaped both by bodies and lived social and psychological experiences.

PAPER #24: 11:20–11:40

Lexico-semantic characteristics of older adults' spontaneous speech as markers of cognitive impairment

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Ageing is commonly associated with changes in cognitive functions, including the language function, which is crucial for daily activity and communication. It is still under investigation which language changes are part of healthy aging and which signal conditions that require clinical intervention, such as mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia.

A wide variety of language tasks has been studied in search for potential markers of emerging cognitive impairment; among them, spontaneous speech tasks appear to be the closest to natural communication (Ostrand & Gunstad, 2021) and, thus, the most representative of the changes in an older individual's language. Spontaneous speech can be analysed to extract many linguistic features. Of particular interest, however, are those features that can be assessed in an automated way for further efficient and scalable employment in clinical practice, where manual annotation is often inapplicable due to time constraints and the need for annotators' specialised training. Among the characteristics of spontaneous speech that *can* be automated are numerous acoustic measures, such as number of pauses, pitch, or speech rate (e.g. Ambrosini et al., 2024). Nevertheless, these parameters, though often correlating with cognitive functioning, might be confounded by physiological changes in phonation, articulation, etc., which often occur in old age (Beton et al., 2023). In this sense, the analysis of lexico-semantic characteristics of spontaneous speech, unaffected by physiology and just as easily automated, might be more predictive of cognitive functioning; nevertheless, fewer studies have been concerned with it.

Our study aims to investigate whether automatically extracted lexico-semantic features of spontaneous speech of the elderly are associated with cognitive functioning as measured by the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA; Nasreddine et al., 2005) score. Study participants were 304 community-dwelling, non-demented, Russian-speaking participants aged 60–95 and attending a memory clinic. They were asked to tell a story about a memorable trip, gift, or party. Then, their responses were recorded and manually transcribed in ELAN. Analysis of lexico-semantic features is currently in progress: we intend to develop a Python script using *gensim* and *nltk* packages for automatic extraction of lexico-semantic features: mean word frequency, type-token ratio, part-of-speech distribution, and local semantic coherence. A linear regression model will be built with MoCA score as the dependent variable and lexico-semantic features as independent variables.

The results of this study, which are to be presented at the conference, will highlight potential reliable lexico-semantic markers of cognitive decline. Such lexico-semantic features could potentially be used to develop speech-based cognitive screening tools that are quick to administer, easily scalable, fully automated, and are available remotely and without special clinician training.

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JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND AGING (JLAR)

The Journal of Language and Aging Research (JLAR) is a peer-reviewed open-access journal focusing on the intersection of aging and language. JLAR has been established in recognition of an emerging community of scholars that is working to discover what actually is happening with language during this varied yet universal process of aging we are all experiencing, and to provide a venue for those investigating this fertile topic to share their findings with each other and with the wider scholarly community.

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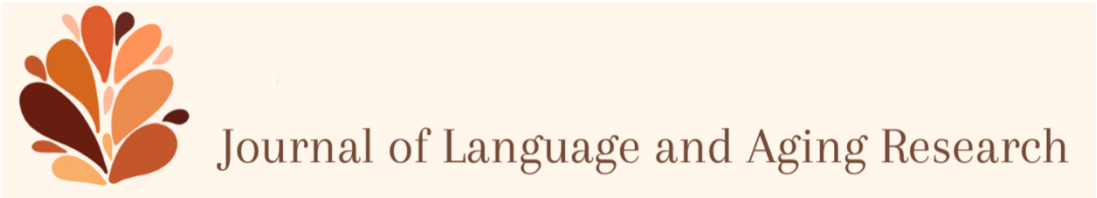

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Special Issue Editor

Prof. Dr. Lihe Huang, Tongji University, Shanghai, China

Multimodality, Language, and Aging

Population aging has intensified research interest in how language changes across the lifespan. While traditional linguistic research has primarily focused on verbal or textual forms, human communication is inherently multimodal, involving the coordinated use of speech, prosody, gesture, facial expression, and body movement (Kendon, 2004; Norris, 2004; Perniss, 2018). From a multimodal perspective, aging is associated not only with changes in linguistic abilities but also with shifts in pragmatic and interactional resources (Petriglia et al., 2025; Yang & Huang, 2024). In cases of neurocognitive disorders such as Alzheimer's disease, individuals may rely on compensatory mechanisms, drawing on multimodal resources including gestures, facial expressions, gaze, and intonation to support communication (Perkins, 2007; Zhou & Huang, 2023; Duboisdindien & Bolly, 2024, 2025). A multimodal approach therefore enables a more comprehensive account of communicative change and adaptation in aging (Huang et al., 2021), inspiring the creation and use of new multimodal resources for the study of language and aging.

Building on this background, this special issue invites submissions of original research papers on the theme of "Multimodality, Language, and Aging". We welcome contributions that adopt a multimodal paradigm to examine language changes and communicative mechanisms in older adults. Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Multimodal interaction in aging;
- Cognitive aging and multimodal compensatory strategies;
- Multimodal construction of age-related identities in cross-generational communication;
- Advances in multimodal corpora and AI-assisted modeling of aging trajectories;
- Multimodality in pathological aging and neurocognitive disorders;
- Cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspectives on multimodal communication in aging.

Submission Instructions

Submission Types: Submissions may take the form of full research papers or brief reports, with lengths ranging from 4,000 to 10,000 words, depending on the submission type.

Formatting: Manuscripts must be written in English and adhere to the journal's formatting guidelines. Detailed instructions are available on the journal website:

https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/hup2/jlar/authorGuidelines.

Submission Process: The submission follows a two-stage process:

Stage 1: Abstract Submission. Authors must first submit an abstract (300 to 500 words) outlining the research background, methodology, and key findings. Abstracts should be sent via email to ageing@tongji.edu.cn. Please use the subject line: [JLAR SI Abstract] - Your Name - Paper Title.

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Important Dates (UTC+8)**:**

Abstract Submission Deadline: July 15, 2026
Notification of Acceptance: August 15, 2026
Full Paper Submission Deadline: November 15, 2026

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