

GUEST LECTURE

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"It's somehow every time a sort of battle inside me."

Multilingual Speakers & Inner Speech



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The study at hand investigates the topic of language distribution and code-switching in multilingual speakers' inner speech. As an internal process that cannot be observed from the outside, inner speech has generally received quite limited attention due to its related methodological difficulties. The few studies that have been conducted predominantly reflect a monolingual perspective (exceptions being Dewaele 2015, Guerrero 2017, and Resnik 2021), neglecting the higher number of multilingual speakers across the world. The present study addresses this research gap by investigating both linguistic and non-linguistic factors in relation to language distribution in multilinguals' inner speech. For the purpose of triangulation, three different methods were employed, yielding both quantitative and qualitative data: A survey, a think-aloud protocol (TAP), and an interview. A total of 45 people participated in the study.

Considering the results provided by the study participants, it is evident that multilingual speakers generally employ multiple languages in their inner speech and that they use them even more dynamically than in their external speech. Regarding the linguistic variables, one can see that languages that are spoken with a high proficiency and frequency in a person's daily life tend to appear more often; meanwhile – and in contrast to the findings of previous research – the age at which language is first acquired or learnt does not necessarily indicate the amount of usage of said language in inner speech. Additionally, non-linguistic variables such as emotional attitudes towards a language or feelings around linguistic and personal identity seem to significantly impact inner speech language distribution and code-switching. Conducting linguistic research on the nature and functions of multilingual inner speech allows us to gain extensive insights into the lives and psyche of multilingual speakers and their language behaviour and learning processes. As such, increased academic research on this topic may constitute a valuable addition to the field of language education.

References:

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Guerrero, M.C.M. (2017). Going covert: Inner and private speech in language learning. *Language Teaching*, 51(1), 1-35.
Resnik, P. (2021) Multilinguals' use of L1 and L2 inner speech. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 24(1), 72-90.

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