

The Adaptive Bilingual Mind

At present, much of the research on bilingual cognition focuses on late second language learners of a small number of languages. In this fascinating book, Evangelia Adamou widens the net by integrating advances in the field of bilingualism with the study of endangered languages. Drawing on recent studies from Europe and Latin America, she demonstrates that experimental psycholinguistic methods can be successfully applied outside the lab and, conversely, how data from these understudied populations provide new insights into the adaptive capacities of the bilingual mind. Adamou shows how bilinguals manage competing conceptualizations of time and space, how their grammars and language-mixing patterns adapt to cognitive constraints such as the need for simplification, and how language processing concurrently adapts to their complex bilingual experience. Combining statistical analyses with detailed linguistic and ethnographic information, this essential book will appeal to scholars of bilingualism, cognitive sciences, language endangerment, and language contact.

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The Adaptive Bilingual Mind

Insights from Endangered Languages

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Preface

This book emerges from my work at the CNRS as a field linguist, specializing in the analysis of under-described languages with an additional focus on language contact. For the last fifteen years as a full-time researcher, I have spent a significant amount of my time doing linguistic fieldwork. I therefore immersed myself in two geographically distinct areas: the Balkans – where I come from – and Mesoamerica – where I had dreamt of working since I got acquainted with Amerindian linguistics at university. Over the past years, my interest in the field of bilingualism has grown, leading to my first studies using experimental methods in the field.

With this book, my goal is to provide a comprehensive overview of recent research on bilingual speakers of endangered languages, drawing on empirical examples from my work. In doing so, I wish to re-define the methodological and theoretical boundaries of the field of endangered languages, while contributing to the fast-growing field of bilingualism studies. In particular, I consider that there is now a coherent body of evidence published in peer-reviewed journals that can be presented in a single volume to draw attention to the adaptive capacities of bilinguals through the study of lesser-known populations and languages. Indeed, although human cognition has a universal basis, recent studies unveil fine-grained distinctions depending on languages and their ecologies.

Taking the bilingual approach to the field of language endangerment, however, raises several methodological hurdles. In this book, I show how research methods from bilingual studies can be successfully applied in the field, including among elderly individuals with little or no schooling. This can be achieved by taking into consideration cultural habits and by working in close collaboration with communities.

This book is primarily addressed to specialists in the two sub-fields that I aim to combine – bilingualism and endangered languages – and, more generally, to researchers and students with an interest in various areas of linguistics and cognition.

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Abbreviations

In this book, some authors' abbreviations have been changed for glossing consistency following the CorTypo list of glosses which builds on the Leipzig glossing rules; accessed at http://cortypo.huma-num.fr/fichiers/List_of_glosses_CorTypo.pdf.

1, 2, 3 first, second, third person	LVM loan verb marker
ABSN absential	M masculine
ACC accusative	NEG negative
ADRE addressee	nFUT non-future
AOR aorist	NOM nominative
ART article	NP noun phrase
BENF benefactive	N neuter
CLF classifier	OBL oblique
COM comitative	OPT optative
DAT dative	PL plural
DEF definite	PN proper noun
DET determiner	POSS possessive
DIM diminutive	PRET preterit
DIST distal	PRO pronoun
EVD evidential	PROG progressive
F feminine	PROX proximal
FN finite nominalizer	PRS present
FOC focus	PST past
FUT future	Q interrogative marker
GEN genitive	REL relative
IMP imperative	RESTR restrictive
IMPF imperfect	SBJ subject
N.INCP incorporated noun	SG singular
INTJ interjection	SPKR speaker
LOC locative	