

Plenary talk abstracts

Karen Roehr-Brackin (University of Essex)

Metalinguistic awareness in context

This presentation will provide an up-to-date overview of the concept of metalinguistic awareness in its theoretical context. Following a brief outline of established findings on the role of metalinguistic awareness in (additional) language learning, I will discuss factors that are known to interact with the development of metalinguistic awareness: language learning aptitude, literacy skills, metacognition with a focus on individuals' self-concepts, and prior linguistic knowledge in the sense of bi- or multilingualism. These factors not only influence and are influenced by metalinguistic awareness, but are also interrelated with each other, yielding a complex network of associations. Bearing in mind potential differences between language learners/users of different ages (children, young adults, older adults), I will conclude with suggestions for future research on the topic of metalinguistic awareness.

Karen Roehr-Brackin is a Reader in Applied Linguistics in the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Essex, the director of the Centre for Language across the Lifespan and the coordinator of the Applied and Experimental Linguistics Research Group at the University of Essex. Her research focuses on explicit and implicit knowledge and processes in additional or second language learning at different ages (children, young adults, older adults) as well as the role of individual differences, in particular language learning aptitude, working memory, and metalinguistic awareness. Her work has been published widely in international peer-reviewed journals, and she is the author of a monograph on metalinguistic awareness in second language acquisition (2018).

Christine Möller-Omrani (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences)

Metalinguistic awareness in early instructed language learning: a synthesis of the MetaLearn project

Since 2020, a team of researchers at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences has been investigating metalinguistic awareness in the context of early instructed language learning through the project "Education for Plurilingualism: Metalinguistic Awareness in Early Instructed Language Learning" (MetaLearn). Grounded in the idea of promoting plurilingualism for *all* pupils, MetaLearn set out to explore metalinguistic awareness—defined as using knowledge about language at a point in real time (Bialystok, 2001)—during the early stages of formal schooling in Norway, from both a learner-centered and a teacher-centered perspective. This presentation will first give an overview of the project framework and present a central tool developed in the project, the MetaLearn metalinguistic awareness test. After that, the presentation will focus on the project's findings regarding young learners and their development from the beginning of third grade (ages 7-8) to the end of fourth grade (ages 9-10).

Christine Möller-Omrani is Associate Professor of English linguistics and language didactics at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. She is the coordinator of the project

“Education for plurilingualism: Metalinguistic awareness in early instructed language learning” (MetaLearn), from which the present article originates. While her current research focuses on metalinguistic awareness in elementary school pupils, Möller-Omrani’s research interests also include multilingualism, teacher cognitions, learner language, and CLIL/immersion.

Monika Bader & Simon Borg (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences)

Teaching for Metalinguistic Awareness: From Teachers’ Practices to Pupils’ Talk

The second MetaLearn plenary talk will turn from learners’ development to how their metalinguistic awareness can be promoted in the classroom. The first part of the talk draws on teacher interviews and classroom observations to examine how five Norwegian primary English teachers understand language awareness (LA) and enact it pedagogically, using this broader construct as the lens for eliciting teacher views on the metalinguistic dimension of teaching. While teachers’ understandings varied, their accounts combined references to cross-linguistic awareness—especially between Norwegian and English—language as a system, and English as a functional communicative resource. Across the observed lessons, LA was most visibly enacted through vocabulary work and meaning-focused activities, with attention to language typically embedded within broader pedagogical routines rather than presented as an explicit focus of learning. The second part of the talk explores the potential of tasks based on translation for promoting metalinguistic awareness. Drawing on a conceptualization of translation as an act of plurilingual mediation, we identify features of translation that make it particularly suited to this purpose and examine how these features are manifested in peer interaction. Based on audio recordings of 64 young learners of English in Norway (aged 8–10) engaged in a collaborative translation task, we demonstrate that translation can give rise to rich metalinguistic talk, making translation tasks an effective means of promoting metalinguistic awareness in additional language learning.

Monika Bader is Associate Professor of English linguistics and language didactics at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. Her research focuses on instructed second language acquisition, with her current work emphasising the role of metalinguistic awareness in additional language learning through the MetaLearn project (“Education for plurilingualism: Metalinguistic awareness in early instructed language learning”), financed by the Norwegian Research Council. Her other areas of interest include multilingual development in educational settings, formative assessment practices, and children’s writing development.

Simon Borg was Professor of TESOL at the University of Leeds until 2013, since when he has worked as a full-time consultant specializing in the design, delivery and evaluation of teacher education and development programmes. He is also Professor II of English at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences and a Visiting Fellow at Sheffield Hallam University. See <https://simon-borg.co.uk/> for details of his work, publications and a blog.

Maria Antonietta Pinto (University of Rome «La Sapienza»)**The role of conflicts in the deployment of metalinguistic processing:
data from children's, adolescents' and adults' responses to metalinguistic tests**

MLA has been defined in multiple ways by linguists, theoretical and applied, and psycholinguists, often with a blend of general cognitive mechanisms (distancing, metacognition, focused attention, control, flexibility, etc.) and more specific linguistic terminology (metalinguistic knowledge, meta-phonological, meta-lexical, meta-semantic, meta-grammatical, meta-morphological domains/abilities, etc.). However, limited attention has been devoted to the role of cognitive conflicts in the overall processing that comes into play when the individual, child or adult, is faced with a metalinguistic problem, except for Karmiloff-Smith (1992) and Bialystok (2001). The former explicitly denies any role of conflict in the representation-redescription process (the R-R model) that characterizes the qualitative changes in metalinguistic development; the latter fundamentally limits the role of cognitive conflicts to the semantic area, especially where disambiguation is required, since this triggers attention and control mechanisms.

Based on extensive experience with metalinguistic tests I devised for children, adolescents, and adults, used in international research in various linguistic versions (www.pintomatel.com), I elaborated a theoretical framework (Melogno, Pinto, 2026), where cognitive conflicts occupy a central place in *the processing of tasks of any type of metalinguistic domain*. A fine-grained analysis of the responses given by the participants to meta-semantic, meta-pragmatic, and meta-grammatical tasks reveals that they are coping with conflicts that are intrinsically embedded in the puzzling way linguistic data are presented. Across the ages, across the metalinguistic domains and the inevitably increasing complexity of the tasks, we noticed a repetitive trend. Conflicts could be eluded in different ways (don't know, tautological responses, or pure repetition of the item), acknowledged, but only partially analyzed, or analyzed in their main components and consistently rearranged in a way that gives sense to each element in its right place. Thus, the responses took the typical form of an argument to solve a conflict and could range from totally insufficient to partially sufficient to totally consistent. In this talk, I will offer several examples drawn from this multifaceted experience with metalinguistic tests at different ages, highlighting the argumentative character of the responses as a way to face and solve metalinguistic conflicts.

Maria Antonietta Pinto is a past professor of Developmental and Educational Psychology at the University of Rome "La Sapienza". Founder and editor-in-chief of the *Rivista di Psicolinguistica Applicata/ Journal of Applied Psycholinguistics*. P.I. of the Lifelong European MATEL Project, focused on metalinguistic awareness tests (www.pintomatel.com).

Presentation abstracts

Joel Alipaß (TU Dortmund), Linda Struck (TU Dortmund) & Katrin Odermann (TU Dortmund)

Metalinguistic awareness from the start: Constructing a tool for supporting (early literacy) through meta-linguistic awareness in preschoolers and young pupils from urban Germany

While training materials on phonological awareness (Noack & Brändel, 2007; Fischer & Pfof, 2015; Küspert & Schneider, 2018) exist for German, training programmes for morphology, syntax, semantics/pragmatics or materials integrating several linguistic levels (as is done for Norwegian in MetaLearn, Haugen et al., 2024) are still lacking. Furthermore, metasemantic and metapragmatic awareness are still understudied in German (cf. Odermann & Mertins, 2026), while these areas, too, are worth researching and fostering with regard to reading acquisition (Tonini et al., 2022). In addition to that, integrated tests on metalinguistic awareness have mostly been designed with samples of school-age children, so that there is little knowledge about the development of metalinguistic knowledge before the start of formal education (Ewald & Steinbrink, 2023). Moreover, in contrast to popular opinions that speaking a family language other than German is still believed to be detrimental to childrens' literacy acquisition and thus educational success in public German discourses, balanced bilingualism may contribute to raising metalinguistic awareness and therefore support early literacy (Bialystok, 2001; Gonçalves et al., 2021).

Our project BeeMEHR tries to meet these needs by piloting and developing teaching materials for preschoolers (5-6-year-olds) and young pupils in Germany, aimed at fostering metalinguistic awareness and supporting literacy acquisition of monolingual and multilingual children. The set of test and practice items are constructed alongside the linguistic dimensions phonology, morphology and semantics/pragmatics.

In our talk, we will first lay out the development of test items and results from the pilot studies on phonological, morphological and semantic-pragmatic awareness with preschool children. Data is currently being analyzed, and associations between metalinguistic knowledge, vocabulary, bilingualism and cognitive variables (phonological working memory, inhibitory control/cognitive flexibility) will be discussed. In a second step, we will present our practicing material and lay out how to integrate it into material for educators and teachers. We will finally suggest how the practicing units on metalinguistic awareness can be transferred further for building a pedagogical app suited for a cooperative learning process between child and educators.

Linda Struck has been a research assistant at TU Dortmund University since 2024. While studying Romance languages (B.A.) and Empirical Multilingualism Research (M.A.), she spent several years working in the nonprofit educational sector and is now working on her doctoral thesis on the devaluation of family languages in Germany. Her research focuses on language attitudes, perceived language value, and the integration of heritage languages in foreign language teaching.

Katrin Odermann has been a research assistant at TU Dortmund University since 2021. She earned a Master's degree in Empirical Multilingualism Research and completed her doctoral

dissertation on children's semantic awareness in 2025. Her research interests include multilingualism, literacy acquisition, and metalinguistic awareness.

Joël Alipaß is a research assistant at TU Dortmund University. After his B.A. in English and History at Ruhr University Bochum he completed his M.A. in Empirical Multilingualism Research (Bochum and TU Dortmund University). Currently, he is a doctoral student working on preschooler's acquisition of pragmatics.

Sara Chamosa-Rabadan (University of the Basque Country & University of Cantabria), María Martínez-Adrián (University of the Basque Country) & Francisco Gallardo-del-Puerto (University of Cantabria)

Metalinguistic awareness, form-focused instruction, and the acquisition of English modal verbs: The case of primary and secondary education learners

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) contexts are characterized by little attention to linguistic form (Basterrechea & García Mayo, 2013). To overcome this limitation, recent studies confirm the efficacy of form-focused instruction in morphosyntactic feature development (Martínez-Adrián & Iglesias-Diéguez, 2026). However, research on the impact of form-focused instruction in other domains, such as modal verbs, is limited. In this respect, L1-L2 contrast-focused tasks (Bell et al., 2020) may promote both grammatical and metalinguistic awareness development (Roehr-Brackin & Tellier, 2019).

This investigation fills this gap by: i) comparing the effect that L1 Spanish-L2 English contrast-focused tasks on modal verbs, versus these tasks with added noticing, awareness, and practice phases, might have on metalinguistic awareness development; ii) examining the potential impact of learners' metalinguistic awareness on modal verb acquisition; and iii) inspecting the development of this awareness from primary to secondary education.

92 Spanish learners of English from 6th primary and 2nd secondary education were assigned to an experimental group, which performed focused tasks followed by a noticing, awareness, and practice phase treatment, or a control group, which simply completed the tasks. All participants took the Metalinguistic Awareness Test (Tellier, 2013) before and after the intervention.

Findings show that form-focused instruction helps to enhance metalinguistic awareness. Among 6th primary learners, the experimental group improves more than the control group, suggesting that combining contrast-focused tasks with noticing, awareness and practice phases is particularly beneficial at this stage. In 2nd secondary, although no significant differences emerge between the control and the treatment group, both obtain higher scores in the post-test.

Additionally, results indicate that baseline metalinguistic awareness levels, the research group, and the interaction between these variables do not significantly predict dyads' modal verb accuracy. Nevertheless, tendencies in the data suggest that, in 6th primary, participants with higher metalinguistic awareness may positively influence their dyad's performance, whereas in 2nd secondary, lower-awareness participants may limit gains in accuracy.

Overall, this investigation suggests that form-focused instruction can foster young learners' metalinguistic awareness development, especially when combined with additional treatments. However, accurate modal verb use seemingly depends on factors beyond metalinguistic awareness and the research group.

Sara Chamosa-Rabadán is a PhD Candidate in the Language Acquisition in Multilingual Settings doctoral program and part of the LASLAB research group at the UPV/EHU (Spain). She holds a Formación del Profesorado Universitario 2022 research contract, from the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. Her research is devoted to form-focused instruction, metalinguistic awareness and the acquisition of English modal verbs in primary and secondary education.

María Martínez-Adrián is an Associate Professor and a member of the LASLAB research group at the UPV/EHU (Spain). Her teaching delves into areas like English Phonetics, Morphology, and Semantics and Second Language Acquisition. Her research has primarily focused on cross-linguistic influence in L2 and L3 acquisition; the acquisition of morpho-syntactic features from the generative perspective in CLIL and NON-CLIL settings; the acquisition of productive and receptive vocabulary; the use of communication strategies in children and adolescents; and interaction and focus-on-form in young learners.

Francisco Gallardo-del-Puerto is an Associate Professor and part of the LEAL research group at the UC (Spain). His teaching covers disciplines such as English Phonetics, Bilingualism, and Second Language Acquisition. His research has mainly centered on the teaching and learning of English pronunciation in EFL contexts and on the acquisition of English in CLIL settings.

Claude Quevillon Lacasse (University of Ottawa) & Susan Ballinger (McGill University)

Is crosslinguistic awareness at the core of developing biliteracy skills? Conceptual and methodological insights from an ongoing project

Previous studies have shown that bi-/multilingual individuals develop higher levels of metalinguistic awareness (MLA) than monolinguals (e.g., Bialystok et al., 2014); in fact, researchers have argued that MLA could be the factor explaining the development of bi-/multilingual skills (e.g., Jessner, 2008), as it has been shown to be related to literacy development and academic achievement (Roehr-Bracken, 2018; 2024). Moreover, in the context of bi-/multilingual development, some researchers (Jessner et al., 2016; Horst et al., 2010) have posited that crosslinguistic awareness (XLA)—awareness of similarities and differences between languages—may actually play a more important role than MLA alone. Thus, in multilingual education contexts, pedagogical approaches that target development of learners' XLA have been recommended to strategically improve their language and literacy skills in more than one language (Cummins, 2025). However, unlike MLA, which has been quite extensively theorized (see, for example, Pinto & El Euch, 2015) and operationalized through different tests (see Roehr-Bracken, 2024), XLA seems to be

under-studied, from both research and pedagogical perspectives, and its potential links to multiliteracy skills remain mostly theoretical.

In answer to these research gaps, during the first two years of an ongoing study at a bilingual elementary school, we have created, piloted and adjusted tasks targeting Grade 3 and 4 students' XLA and biliteracy skills in both English, their dominant language of instruction, and French, their second language. XLA tasks included word translations and sentence comparisons with elicitation questions as well as general open-ended questions. Participating students ($n = 33$) completed these tasks individually during a 25-minute oral, videotaped interview. Interviews were analyzed using Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling (RQM; Dörnyei, 2014; Gu, 2023), adopting a Complex Dynamic Systems lens (Larsen Freeman, 2012) to explore XLA as a measurable and multi-faceted construct. In this talk, we will discuss how this first phase of our research project has allowed us to better understand and measure the construct of XLA in relation to multiliteracy development.

Dr. Claude Quevillon Lacasse is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. She is interested in the development of bi-/plurilingual competencies, meta-/crosslinguistic awareness, crosslinguistic pedagogy, grammar teaching and writing instruction, particularly through children's literature, and teacher training. She is the current French editor of the *Canadian Journal of Education* (CJE).

Dr. Susan Ballinger is Associate Professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. Her research investigates language learning and pedagogy in bilingual education settings. Specific interests include crosslinguistic and plurilingual pedagogies, language awareness, and content and language integrated instruction. She is currently the Co-Editor of the *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education* (John Benjamins).

Amanda Cristina de Freitas (Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp))

Explicit reflections on indirect requests: a pilot study with learners of Brazilian Portuguese

This study investigates how learners of Brazilian Portuguese (BP) as an additional language interpret and evaluate the appropriateness of non-conventional indirect requests. Drawing on Interlanguage Pragmatics, the research examines the role of sociopragmatic variables—social distance, degree of imposition, and relative power—in learners' interpretation and evaluation of requests. In addition, the study explores participants' written justifications as manifestations of explicit reflection on language use and on the criteria mobilized when analyzing communicative situations. The data come from a pilot study involving 22 participants divided into two groups: 11 native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese and 11 native speakers of Spanish learning BP. Participants completed an online questionnaire composed of 16 communicative situations involving direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect requests. For each situation, participants were asked to interpret the utterance, evaluate its appropriateness, and justify their judgment. Preliminary findings

reveal differences between learners and native speakers, particularly in the processing of non-conventional indirect requests. While native speakers tended to identify the speaker's communicative intention directly, learners more frequently described the situation without explicitly identifying the request (e.g., focusing on what was happening in the scenario) or reconstructed contextual information by adding motivations or consequences for the speaker's behavior. Regarding appropriateness judgments, native speakers appeared to adjust their evaluations more consistently according to sociopragmatic variables, whereas learners often evaluated situations as appropriate even when they did not explicitly identify the intended request. Analysis of the justifications revealed different evaluative criteria across groups. Native speakers more frequently referred to sociopragmatic considerations, such as the relationship between interlocutors, contextual appropriateness, and the degree of directness of the request. Learners, in contrast, more often focused on features of the utterance itself, including clarity and politeness. Rather than treating these justifications as direct evidence of metalinguistic awareness, the study approaches them as instances of explicit reflection on language and language use. The findings suggest that learners and native speakers rely on partially different evaluative criteria when reflecting on indirect requests, with native speakers attending more frequently to sociopragmatic relations and learners drawing more heavily on utterance-level.

De Freitas is a PhD candidate in Linguistics. Research focused on Interlanguage Pragmatics and second language acquisition, particularly the comprehension and evaluation of indirect requests by learners of Brazilian Portuguese as an additional language.

Miwa Isobe (University of Yamanashi), Tomomi Kougo (Jumonji University), Mika Igarashi (Hosen College of Childhood Education), Yukio Otsu (Keio University)

Enhancing L1 Metalinguistic Awareness through L2 Learning: Restrictive and Non-Restrictive Relative Clauses as a Test Case

This study investigates whether L2 knowledge can heighten learners' metalinguistic awareness (MA) of corresponding structures in their L1, focusing on Japanese relative clauses (RCs). Unlike English, Japanese RCs do not distinguish restrictive and non-restrictive interpretations phonologically or orthographically, as illustrated in (1). Although Japanese students learn this distinction in English, they are not explicitly taught that Japanese RCs likewise permit both interpretations. Instead, students are instructed to make the distinction explicit by translating English non-restrictive RCs (NRRCs) such as (2b) into Japanese like conjunctive sentences such as (2c) ([1]). It therefore remains unclear whether students can recognize that Japanese NPs containing a RC such as (1) are structurally ambiguous.

Considering this situation, two experiments were conducted with Japanese first-year high school students. Experiment 1 examined whether 39 students could recognize the ambiguity of two Japanese RC-containing NPs such as (3) after explicit instruction on the ambiguity of the phrase (4) and a RC-containing NP such as (3). Participants detected the ambiguity only 46% of the time (36/78). Given the low level of awareness observed in Experiment 1, Experiment 2 examined whether instruction on English restrictive RCs (RRCs)

and NRRCs could enhance learners' awareness of corresponding interpretations in Japanese. 24 students who had not participated in Experiment 1 were randomly assigned to an experimental group (EG) or a control group (CG) and individually completed a pre-test, an intervention session, and immediate and delayed post-tests. In the tests, participants responded orally to nine sets of twopanel illustrations with Japanese captions including an NP with a RC such as (3). The captions were designed to induce misunderstandings based on restrictive and non-restrictive interpretations (see Figure). During the intervention, the EG viewed an instructional video explaining the differences between English RRCs and NRRCs, whereas the CG viewed a video on an unrelated English topic. In the immediate post-test, EG showed a significantly higher probability of correct responses than CG ($OR = 4.06$, $p = .011$), suggesting English learning can enhance MA of Japanese. Although this effect was not sustained in the delayed post-test, the findings suggest L2 learning may deepen awareness of L1 structure.

Miwa Isobe is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Yamanashi, Japan. She received her Ph.D. from Keio University, Japan. Her research interests lie in psycholinguistics, particularly first language acquisition.

Tomomi Kougo is a Professor in the Department of Elementary Education and Humanities at Jumonji University in Japan. Her interests include linguistics (specifically English syntax), English language teaching, and metalinguistic awareness.

Mika Igarashi teaches psychology at Aoyama Gakuin University and English at Hosen College of Childhood Education in Japan. Her research interests include second language acquisition, metalinguistic awareness, and cross-linguistic influence, with a particular focus on the relationship between second language (L2) learning and first language (L1) development.

Yukio Otsu is Professor Emeritus at Keio University in Tokyo. He received his Ph.D. from MIT and has since pursued research on first language acquisition, parsing, and language education.

Carola Koblitz (University of Vienna)

Linguistic Living Spaces as a Catalyst for Metalinguistic Awareness in Diverse Learning Contexts

This contribution examines how the arts-based method Linguistic Living Spaces (LLS) fosters metalinguistic awareness in additional language learning across diverse educational and migratory contexts. Metalinguistic awareness is understood here as learners' capacity to attend to language as an object of reflection, to notice structural, functional, and affective dimensions of linguistic experience, and to articulate these insights explicitly. Drawing on data from LLS workshops conducted with secondary school learners, adult migrants, and multilingual young adults in Austria, the study demonstrates how visual-spatial representations of linguistic repertoires open a reflective space in which participants recognize, analyse, and re-evaluate the languages they use, learn, and inherit. Across

settings, learners reported heightened awareness of the spatial and affective presence of additional languages in their everyday lives. School learners identified how foreign languages “take up space” in classrooms and personal environments, prompting reflection on learning trajectories, perceived difficulty, and cross-linguistic connections. Migrant participants highlighted the dual value of acquiring a new societal language while maintaining minority languages for intergenerational transmission. Through the process of creating and narrating their LLS artefacts, participants engaged in explicit comparison, categorization, and functional reasoning about their languages-core indicators of metalinguistic awareness. Methodologically, the study combines arts-based elicitation with semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis. The findings suggest that LLS provides a powerful pedagogical tool for activating metalinguistic awareness by making linguistic experiences visible, tangible, and discussable. The contribution argues that integrating arts-based, spatial approaches into language education can support learners in developing reflective, agentic orientations toward their multilingual repertoires.

Carola Koblitz, University of Vienna, is a researcher in multilingualism, arts-based methods, and spatial approaches to language learning. She leads international workshops on the Linguistic Living Spaces method and investigates how multilingual young adults construct and reflect on their linguistic environments. Her work focuses on bridging research, pedagogy, and creative practice.

Ji

hyeon Lee (Technical University Darmstadt)

Metalinguistic Awareness in Action: Rethinking Language Awareness as an Emergent Process

Metalinguistic awareness is often conceptualised as learners’ explicit knowledge about language and their ability to verbalise linguistic phenomena. Although this perspective has contributed substantially to our understanding of language awareness, it tends to privilege what learners know over how they engage with language in the course of reflection. This study adopts a process-oriented perspective to explore how metalinguistic awareness emerges through the dynamic interplay of knowledge, attentional regulation, and reflective action during language-related problem solving.

The study draws on data from 16 Korean heritage language learners in Germany who completed language awareness tasks while verbalising their thoughts. Think-aloud protocols were analysed using qualitative content analysis, and an inductively and theoretically informed coding framework was developed to capture three interrelated dimensions of metalinguistic awareness: (1) linguistic knowledge, referring to the extent to which learners are able to verbalise language-related knowledge; (2) attentional regulation, encompassing cognitive control processes such as monitoring, inhibition, and updating; and (3) reflective actions, including activities such as hypothesising, comparing, characterising, justifying, and making decisions.

Preliminary findings suggest that these dimensions rarely operate in isolation. Learners with only limited verbalizable knowledge nevertheless engaged in complex reflective

processes by monitoring their reasoning, reconsidering emerging interpretations, suppressing competing explanations, and arriving at informed decisions. Conversely, extensive linguistic knowledge did not necessarily lead to more elaborated reflection. Rather than being a static body of knowledge, metalinguistic awareness appeared to emerge from the ways in which learners mobilised available knowledge, regulated their attention, and engaged in reflective actions on linguistic information while solving language-related tasks.

By conceptualising metalinguistic awareness as an emergent process rather than a stable cognitive possession, this study contributes to ongoing discussions about the nature of metalinguistic awareness and highlights the value of process-oriented approaches for research on multilingualism, heritage language learning, and language awareness.

Jihyeon Lee is a doctoral researcher in the Department of Linguistics – Multilingualism at the Technical University of Darmstadt, Germany. Her dissertation project explores metalinguistic awareness as an emergent process in multilingual contexts, with a particular focus on Korean heritage language learners in Germany.

Will Travers (University at Albany, SUNY)

Introducing the Metalinguistic Awareness Questionnaire (MAQ): A novel method for measuring metalinguistic awareness across languages

Over the course of the past several decades, scientific consensus has slowly been building around the important role played by metalinguistic awareness (MA) during the acquisition of a third or additional language by adult language learners (e.g. Sanz & Zhang, 2023). Some scholars have even ascribed to it a great deal of predictive power over which bilinguals are ultimately successful in learning another language (e.g. Thomas, 1988). Yet in practice, the methods that researchers have used to test for it remain quite varied, with some opting to measure it in a language that test-takers already know, whereas others use an assessment that features a language unknown to participants (Fiorenza & Travers, 2025), leading to the very real possibility that researchers have actually been measuring two closely related, yet methodologically distinct constructs. In any case, the result of this wide variation in assessment type is that more work needs to be done in order to identify and standardize the best way to test for MA in adults. The present paper outlines one possible solution to this problem in the form of the Metalinguistic Awareness Questionnaire, or MAQ (Travers, 2024). The MAQ distinguishes itself from other instruments such as the test battery developed by Pinto and colleagues (e.g. Pinto, Titone, & Trusso, 1999) in that it can be administered in a relatively short amount of time, and yet does not rely upon knowledge of any one language in particular, lending it a large degree of cross-linguistic comparability. The goal of this paper is to introduce the MAQ and describe how its administration and scoring procedure may represent a viable alternative to other assessment instruments. In addition, this paper will present the results of a small-scale pilot study featuring the second version of the MAQ, in which several improvements were made over the original study materials created by Meara (2005), and upon which the MAQ is based

Dr. Will Travers earned his PhD in Spanish Linguistics from Georgetown University and has taught at both Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and Davidson College in North Carolina, in addition to his current position at the University at Albany, SUNY (in the State of New York). His research focus is on third-language acquisition and teaching, with a special focus on the role played by metalinguistic awareness in foreign-language learning.

Elsa Ubeda (Columbia University)

Learner Initiatives as Sites of Emergent Metalinguistic Awareness: A Multimodal Conversation Analytic Approach

Metalinguistic awareness (MLA) — broadly understood as the capacity to treat language as an object of reflection and analysis (Roehr-Brackin, 2018) — has been widely recognized as a facilitative factor in additional language learning. Empirically, MLA has been predominantly studied through elicited data: metalinguistic knowledge tests, think-aloud protocols, and task-based interactions designed specifically to generate metalinguistic talk (Bader et al., 2026; Roehr-Brackin, 2018). While this body of research has yielded important insights, it has left largely unaddressed a fundamental question: how does metalinguistic awareness manifest and develop within the naturally occurring talk of the additional language classroom? This paper addresses that gap by examining learner-initiated sequences as interactional sites where MLA is occasioned, displayed, and co-constructed in real time — and by foregrounding the role of teacher Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC; Walsh, 2006) in shaping whether these moments become genuine opportunities for metalinguistic reflection.

Drawing on data from a beginning-level Catalan as an additional language classroom at a U.S. university, this study applies multimodal Conversation Analysis (CA) to examine sequences in which learners selfselect to introduce, contest, or elaborate on metalinguistic content — including grammatical contrasts, form-function relationships, and cross-linguistic comparisons drawn from their prior language learning experience. These learner initiatives (Balıkcı & Seferoğlu, 2023; Waring, 2011; Ubeda, 2025) disrupt the canonical Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) sequence and open interactional spaces in which language is treated as an object of collective analysis and reflection.

The analysis reveals that learner-initiated metalinguistic sequences are multiparty, embodied, and sequentially complex: multiple students contribute simultaneously, building shared epistemic positions through gesture, gaze, and talk. It further shows that the teacher's interactional practices — how she receipts, redirects, delays, or builds on these initiatives — are central to whether the metalinguistic potential of these moments is realized or foreclosed.

These findings contribute to a growing body of research calling for an interactional reconceptualization of MLA, one that locates awareness not solely within individual cognition but in the sequential organization of classroom talk. Implications for teacher education and the development of CIC are discussed.

Elsa Úbeda is Lecturer in Catalan and Catalan Program Director at Columbia University. Her research focuses on classroom interaction, learner agency, and Classroom Interactional Competence in additional language settings.

Eugenia Wildt & Katharina J. Rohlfing (Paderborn University)

Social robots for fostering preschoolers' metalinguistic awareness

While social robots are increasingly used in educational settings for language learning (Wang & Cheung, 2025), e.g. introducing new vocabulary or storytelling (Van de Berghe et al., 2018), they have limitations when interacting with and responding to children. As a result, children experience more communication breakdowns when interacting with the AI partner, like robots, than with a human partner (Li et al., 2026). However, these limitations, particularly in pronunciation, timing, and contingency, can create an excellent opportunity to talk about language and interactive behavior of robots (Rohlfing et al., 2022; Tolksdorf et al., 2024), that is called metalinguistic talk (Bader et al. 2025).

Drawing on a pilot study by Tolksdorf et al. (2024), we investigated whether young children could reflect on a robot's language using verbal, nonverbal, and paraverbal dimensions. Eighteen preschoolers visited a university setting with their educators. After a brief familiarization activity, children listened to a short story narrated by a NAO robot. In a baseline condition, the robot displayed its typical speech characteristics, including slow speech, pauses, and reduced articulatory precision. In an experimental condition, these characteristics were further amplified through programmed phonological substitutions, e.g. fronting (e.g., Dold instead of Gold). Following the story-telling phase, children participated in smallgroup discussions guided by a structured set of scaffolding questions designed to elicit reflection on the robot's language.

Our results indicate that preschoolers were able to engage in metalinguistic talk about the robot's language. They commented on verbal properties such as speech clarity and pronunciation, on nonverbal aspects such as facial expression and gesture, and on paraverbal features such as speaking rate, loudness, and pausing. Some children in the experimental condition additionally identified the programmed phonological deviations. Although the depth of reflection varied across participants, structured scaffolding questions enabled all children to contribute to the metalinguistic discussion. These findings suggest that social robots can serve as effective tool for fostering metalinguistic awareness in early childhood education.

Dr. Eugenia Wildt. PhD, works in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Paderborn University (Germany). Her research interests include developmental psycholinguistics, early language acquisition, particularly the memory and attentional processes underlying it, as well as parent-child interactions with digital media and technology.

Prof. Dr. Katharina J. Rohlfing. Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Paderborn University (Germany). Her research interests include developmental psycholinguistics, the interface between cognitive development and language acquisition as well as the collaborative mechanisms of multimodal social interaction.

Mari Karoline Wilhelmsen (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

Measuring metalinguistic awareness in Norwegian teenagers: an exploratory study

The present study aims to explore methods of measuring metalinguistic awareness specifically in teenagers in the Norwegian context. Extant literature includes various task formats, primarily used with either children or adults. However, not all tasks are reliable for all participants, depending on for instance their age and learning context. The learning context of the present study is characterized by Norwegian L1, English L2 and, for many, an L3. English is taught in school from age 6, but for many, acquisition of English also largely happens through out-of-school exposure and use, making this a non-immersed but input-rich L2 learning context. Simultaneously, there is a relatively low emphasis on explicit grammar teaching in L1 and L2 lessons in school (e.g., Brøseth et al., 2020).

Teenage participants (n = 241, age 15-17) were tested using multiple metalinguistic tasks developed for this project, but based on existing task formats: morphological manipulation of nonwords using inflection (Berko, 1958; Reder et al., 2013) and derivation (Wu & Juffs, 2022), word function matching (inspired by MLAT IV, Roehr, 2008), knowledge of metalinguistic terminology (e.g., Alderson et al., 1997), and error explanation (e.g., Roehr, 2008). All five tasks included both L1 and L2 items.

Data was analysed using exploratory factor analysis in order to identify potential underlying constructs, i.e., to explore whether some of the different tasks measure the same kind of ability or knowledge. Preliminary results indicate that the abilities measured are cross-linguistic. The two morphological tasks, despite their different formats, may measure the same underlying construct – morphological awareness. The error explanation and metalanguage tasks, commonly used in tandem to measure metalinguistic knowledge, did not load together on the same factor. I hypothesize that this is because an error explanation task does not directly measure the participants metalinguistic knowledge, but instead their ability to *express* said knowledge.

The tasks largely do not appear to measure the same underlying construct. This supports the use of several task formats in order to capture the breadth of participants' metalinguistic awareness. These findings may be applicable to the Nordic countries in general due to similarities in learning contexts.

Mari Karoline Wilhelmsen is a PhD candidate at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. The PhD project aims to explore the role of metalinguistic awareness in second and third language acquisition in Norwegian teenagers. In the current phase of the project, methodological considerations, namely finding reliable and valid ways of measuring metalinguistic awareness in the relevant participant group, are the most central.