

Psycholinguistic experiments as a tool for studying contact and typology: Methodological and conceptual concerns

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How and why do languages vary? This is a question central to many fields of linguistics, and models which take mechanisms of variation and change into account inevitably intersect with big questions in psycholinguistics, such as how processing and production are influenced by different contexts of language experience. In my work, I've been using psycholinguistic experiments as a way to not only document and compare individuals and languages, but also in an attempt to understand mechanisms of contact-induced change. This talk covers some results from this emergent research program, asking in particular about typology and contact of flexible constituent order, and charts some paths forward. Along the way, I discuss some methodological and conceptual concerns which our group has encountered and addressed as we adapt tools from psycholinguistics to lesser-studied languages and communities.