MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

Directors:

Prof. Dr. Simon E. Fisher

Prof. Dr. Peter Hagoort

Prof. Dr. Antje S. Meyer

Prof. Dr. Caroline Rowland

Prof. Dr. Stephen C. Levinson (em.)

Prof. Dr. Anne Cutler (em.)

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Klein (em.)

Prof. Dr. Willem J.M. Levelt (em.)

P.O. Box 310, 6500 AH NIJMEGEN

Street address:

Wundtlaan 1, 6525 XD NIJMEGEN

The Netherlands

Tel: +31 (0)24 3521 911

Fax: +31 (0)24 3521 213

E-mail: firstname.surname@mpi.nl

<http://www.mpi.nl>

XX January 2020

Dear Members of the Editorial Team,

We submit to you our manuscript entitled, “Early language experience in a Papuan community”. We use daylong recordings of children’s language experiences on Rossel Island, Papua New Guinea, to estimate how much directed and overhearable speech children under 3;0 typically encounter. Our study builds off of recent ethnographic work on this same subsistence-farming island community suggesting that children and adults orient toward infants and young children as potential conversational partners. We compare our findings to a near-parallel study conducted in another subsistence-farming community in Southern Mexico, where caregivers instead minimize direct speech to children until the children begin to speak themselves. We find that daylong recordings, while effectively capturing children’s overall pattern of linguistic input, are not sensitive to these differences in attitudes about talk to children: in both contexts, circumstantial aspects of everyday life (e.g., how many other people are around) shape children’s overall pattern of linguistic input, with children in both contexts hearing around three minutes of directed speech per hour, maximum.

There has recently been a much-needed uptick in studies using methods from developmental psychology to create cross-culturally comparable estimates of how much (directed) speech children hear in small-scale non-Western communities (e.g., Tsimane: Cristia et al., 2019; Scaff et al., in prep; Quechua-Spanish bilinguals: Cychosz et al., in prep; Yucatec: Shneidman and Goldin-Meadow, 2012; Tseltal: Casillas et al., 2019; Juǀʼhoan: Yetish, Cristia, & colleagues, ongoing; and multi-lingual children in Vanuatu: Colleran, Cristia & colleagues, ongoing). This work with economically, linguistically, and culturally diverse populations is fundamental to establishing the constraints on linguistic input that support typical language acquisition. However, it remains unclear how these generalized measures of input relate to caregiver ideologies about talk to young children or, given relatively little child-directed speech, what other mechanisms children rely on to extract the information they need from the language they do encounter.

This study is unique and novel in its methods (hand-transcribed and annotated segments from daylong photo-linked audio recordings) and the population represented (it is the very first to use daylong recordings to investigate child language development in Melanesia). These data are the result of 4–6 week fieldtrips to the host community conducted in 2016, 2018, and 2019. Notably, all data collection, archiving, transcription/annotation, and analyses were done during active interaction with other daylong audio researchers; all tools and training materials used are open source; and the data are securely-shared via HomeBank so that these hard-to-acquire data have a maximum long-term impact for both future cross-linguistic comparative work and for work focused on Rossel language acquisition in particular.

Our findings are exciting:

XX

summary of discussion/implcations

why we’re submitting here

We verify that these data and analyses have been presented at conferences, but are not published nor under consideration elsewhere, online or otherwise. The authors have all agreed to the content and declare no conflicts of interest.

All the data, code, associated scripts, and the manuscript text itself are available from various open science repositories. To keep review double-blind, we have stripped the manuscript of these repository links, and we instead provide a temporary link in the main text to an anonymous OSF repository where the basic data and analyses presented in the paper can be found:

[LINK](https://osf.io/9xd5u/?view_only=03a351c1172f4d17af9fce634aefb65e)

The contact information for three potential referees is below:

- Laura Shneidman ADD EMAILS

- Catherine Tamis-LeMonda

- Tanya Broesch

- Erica Cartmill

- Carmel O'Shannessy

We do not recommend asking the following researchers or their students/postdocs to review this manuscript as they are active co-authors with the first author and may therefore have a conflict of interest: Drs. Elika Bergelson, Alejandrina Cristia, Melanie Soderstrom, and Adriana Weisleder.

Sincerely,

Marisa Casillas (corresponding author):

marisa.casillas@mpi.nl,

+31 (0)6 1827 8960 (phone),

+31 (0)24 3521 213 (fax)

Wundtlaan 1, 6525 XD, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Penelope Brown: penelope.brown@mpi.nl

Stephen C. Levinson: stephen.levinson@mpi.nl