

## LingedIn

Zuzanna Fuchs, Friday February 24  
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

**Title: Predictive use of grammatical gender: What contribution can heritage speakers make?**

Recent years have seen younger members of immigrant communities push to relearn the languages they learned from their parents but then lost to some degree after entering school. Known as *heritage speakers*, they hope to reconnect with their cultures through relearning their first language. The project I am developing uses Spanish and Polish as case studies to examine what these heritage speakers know about their language implicitly and whether they can use this knowledge extemporaneously. Using an eye-tracking study that employs the visual world paradigm I will investigate whether heritage speakers are able to use grammatical gender predictively. In other words, when they see two images (one of an item that is masculine in their language and one that is feminine) and hear a prompt that includes a noun phrase such as *la mesa* (Spanish 'the table'), are they able to use the gender information on the article *la* to predict that they should look at the feminine item (rather than the masculine one, such as a book – Spanish *el libro*) before the onset of the noun *mesa* itself? Native speakers are certainly able to do so, but my previous work suggests that heritage speakers' knowledge of grammatical gender is bundled with other linguistic information and is therefore hypothesized to be more difficult to access under time pressure. By comparing several language groups (heritage speakers of Spanish and heritage speakers of Polish, living in the US and in Germany) it will further determine through systematic empirical observation how properties of a heritage speaker's dominant language might affect performance as well.