

Recovering Voices Seminar Series

Join us for hybrid mini-talks and discussion with visiting COLING fellows Konrad Rybka, Leiden University and Joanna Dolińska, University of Warsaw

May 23, 2023 12pm-1pm Rose Room, NMNH

Zoom link: <https://tinyurl.com/2a7k5xa4>

Konrad Rybka Leiden University (Netherlands)

From Language Documentation to History of Science

In this talk, I go over the salient points of my work, which evolved from documenting critically endangered Indigenous languages of the Guianas into reconstructing the roles that their speakers have played in science. In broad strokes, my focus on language documentation, with its focus on various domains of human knowledge, underlies several interdisciplinary projects. Documenting and sharing Indigenous star and plant knowledge using the Stellarium and WhatsApp mobile apps, respectively, offer two examples thereof. My focus on endangered languages and interdisciplinary interests have thus led me to work with botanical, biological, and anthropological sources, related to the Indigenous people of the Guianas, including museum and other collections. But in contrast to modern language documentation, such sources do not always explicitly acknowledge the role that Indigenous people played in creating them. These lacunae have inspired me to try to re-construct and re-centre the work of such unnumbered Indigenous people who contributed to these bodies of knowledge, in some cases advancing research in multiple disciplines at a time, sometimes over decades.

Joanna Dolińska University of Warsaw (Poland)

The Social and Ecological Environment Influence on Multilingualism in the Akha, Lahu and Karen communities of Northern Thailand

The region of Southeast Asia can be characterized by a high level of biodiversity and it is famous for its rich linguistic landscape. The biodiversity and multilingualism in this region are becoming endangered due to the globalization, industrialization and intensive tourism. The available data suggest that the simultaneous disappearance of linguistic and biological diversity is not coincidental. This talk, dedicated to the Akha, Lahu and Karen communities from the Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces in northern Thailand, will share field work results carried out in March and April 2023 within the pilot project "Interdependence of multilingualism and biodiversity in the Chiang Mai and Satun provinces in Thailand". The data acquired during the field work and from the open-access databases will be analyzed with the help of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, including the tools of big data analysis. The main goal is to analyze the mechanisms and forms of interaction between local speech communities and various ecosystems. In addition, it is expected that the research outcomes will shed light on the reasons and consequences of the interdependence of multilingualism and biodiversity in general.