

# Summary of Symposium HERLING

Leiden University, 12 January 2019

In the Netherlands, more than 2.5 million people grow up in a bilingual environment (KNAW 2018). HERLING (“Heritage Linguistics”) is a centre for heritage language research that draws on the expertise of linguists who work on languages that are spoken in the home environment of infants, children and young adults in the Netherlands today.

The first HERLING symposium took place 12 January 2019. Jason Rothman presented recent findings on child bilingualism with a special focus on the acquisition of one “home” language from birth and the acquisition of the dominant language of the society as of age 2. Heritage language acquisition by young children is not “incomplete acquisition” (an apple missing a bite), but rather the acquisition of a different variety of the language (a green rather than a red apple).

Ellen-Petra Kester introduced the audience to different varieties of Papiamentu in the Dutch Antilles and the Netherlands. She elaborated on language preferences and language usage of Papiamentu speakers. Monika Schmid, a native-speaker of German now living in the UK, illustrated the changes in her own language repertoire across her lifespan. She showed that exposure to other languages always induces an effect on one’s native language.

Languages change all the time, not only in the regions where the language is spoken as a majority language, but also in countries where it is a heritage language. Some examples of changes emerging in Turkish as spoken by speakers living in the Netherlands were presented by Ad Backus. Aone van Engelenhoven focused on the different ways in which the Nusalaut languages of eastern Indonesia are adapted and maintained in the Netherlands.

The afternoon marked the launch of the HERLING Laboratory. Niels Schiller, director of LUCL, officially opened the Lab founded by Janet Grijzenhout, Deniz Tat and Maria Carmen Parafita Couto. Gisella van van Duijnen and Maria van der Poll shared their personal experiences with different languages they were exposed to in different countries.

As an introduction to group-discussions, a video presentation first showed Turkish-Dutch students who contemplated on their usage of Turkish and Dutch in their daily lives. Central to the discussions led by Antje Muntendam, Leonie Cornips, and Maarten Kossmann were the themes “language and identity”, “language in education” and “heritage languages across generations”. The marginalized position that heritage languages occupy within Dutch society was a recurrent issue. The participants felt a need to strengthen the ties between research on heritage languages, public health services and the education sector to ensure that research output will be relevant and accessible to heritage speakers in the Netherlands. HERLING is committed to these efforts and will continue to organize both language-specific and topic-specific events which contribute to raising public awareness and promoting research on heritage languages in the Netherlands.