

Obsolescence or diachronic change? Embracing variation in linguistic analysis



Daniel Hieber's work focuses on Indigenous North American languages, especially the Chitimacha (*Sitimaxa*) language of Louisiana. He currently works with heritage speakers to revitalize the language.

Language obsolescence is often a convenient scapegoat in cases where variation confounds our analyses and no clear patterns emerge from the data. This talk illustrates how to better incorporate linguistic variation into descriptions and improve both the synchronic and diachronic analysis of a language. The discussion is based on examples from Chitimacha, a language isolate once spoken in Louisiana. Linguistic analyses and descriptions are presented from archival materials on the language to show a) how good documentation of linguistic variation in these documents enables better analyses today, and b) how that variation has informed contemporary grammatical analysis of the language. Understanding the processes by which languages change helps us be more tolerant of linguistic variation in our descriptions and provide a more complete grammatical picture.

MONDAY 11 APRIL 3:30 PM (Brisbane, Australia time)
ZOOM LINK AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST FROM neil.alexander.walker@gmail.com