

– **Title of presentation: Proficiency assessment in bilingualism research: How valid are our measures?**

The field of Spanish heritage language acquisition is in need of proficiency measures that can help researchers comply with investigation standards and compare speakers across groups and studies. The DELE test (Montrul & Slabakova, 2003) is one of the most used proficiency assessments in the field. Nonetheless, it was originally developed for L2 learners, and its validity for use by HL learners should be tested. In this study, I analyze the test validity evidence for the DELE and present an elicited imitation task (EIT) as a more equitable instrument.

203 participants (71 HL and 132 L2 learners) at different levels of linguistic ability were recruited, and they completed a battery of tests, including an EIT and the DELE test. Rasch analyses were used to evaluate the construct validity of the DELE and the EIT, and correlation analyses were performed to observe the concurrent validity of the test with other measures (features of complexity, accuracy, and fluency; ACTFL's OPI; and Versant test). Results showed that the EIT and the DELE test scores presented an appropriate fit to the Rasch model, and their scores were strongly correlated. However, results of correlation analyses with other measures pointed at the DELE being an assessment of higher language cognition (HLC) and the EIT measuring both HLC and basic language cognition (Hulstijn, 2011).

This study contributes to the field of heritage language acquisition research by inspecting the use of proficiency assessments typically included in Spanish HL research. While the DELE test appeared to be efficient in its assessment of the HL group, it did not seem to assess the same dimension of proficiency as the EIT. Therefore, researchers should select the appropriate proficiency test with regard to what dimension of proficiency they are interested in assessing.

– **Learning objectives:**

- There are different steps needed in a validation process to observe whether a proficiency measure is appropriate for use by HL learners.
- Different proficiency measures can tap into different dimensions of proficiency (basic language cognition, higher language cognition).
- Groups of learners (L2/HL) may respond differently to different proficiency tests depending on the dimensions of proficiency they measure.