

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND BILINGUALISM LAB

NEWSLETTER**L.A.B.****SUMMER 2026**

Welcome to the official LAB Lab Newsletter! We would like to start by thanking all of the families who have participated in our studies and continuously supported us. Continue reading to find out what we have been up to this summer!

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WAISMAN
CENTER

(608) 263-5764



@uwbilingualism

1500 Highland Avenue
Madison, WI 53705

uwbilingualism@waisman.wisc.edu

<https://lab.csd.wisc.edu>

MEET OUR SUMMER 2026 TEAM!

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR



MARGARITA KAUSHANSKAYA

LAB MANAGER and SLP

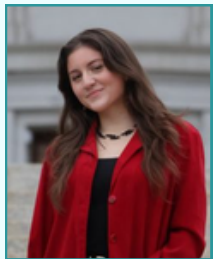


DAVE CURTIS

RESEARCH SPECIALISTS



CLARA MERKEL



SARA DONOSO

LAB PSYCHOLOGIST



LUCIA STUBBS

DOCTORAL STUDENTS



EMMA LIBERSKY



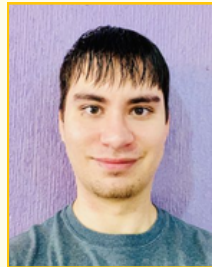
CAITLYN SLAWNY



EMILY BAGAN



CHENELLE WALKER



CHRISTOPHER PADILLA

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS



EVELYN ANTON



OLIVIA BERTHER



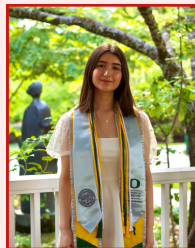
ELLA BURCH



ABBY CUI



AIIME DUARTE



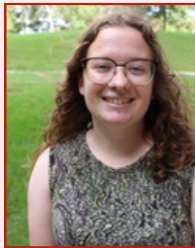
HANA DUSSAN



PETER FISHMAN



SOFIA GOLDENSTEIN



LUCY JUMBECK



YANA KRUTNYK



JAKE LI



KIERA LYKKEN



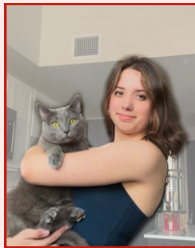
EMILY MAYER



ZOE NICKCHEN



ANABELL RAMOS



NORA SEVERSON



AMELIA TANG



JULIA TSAROVSKY



GABI WOLF

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

LAB MEMBERS VISIT SPAIN WITH UTEP

Through Project Bridging Voices: University of Texas-El Paso and UW-Madison Exchange, three LAB members had the opportunity to take part in a ten-day program in Barcelona, Spain. During the program, they took part in a variety of immersive cultural experiences, such as cooking and flamenco classes. The group visited historical landmarks and sites, including Park Guell, the Gothic Quarter, and Hospital de San Pau. The students on this trip took part in several classes with a speech-language pathologist, Maria, who practices in Spain. Maria clarified her professional roles, highlighted some differences between practicing as an SLP in Spain and the US, and discussed special education in Spain. The group also led an activity for adults with disabilities! This program was a very rewarding experience for both UW and UTEP students that allowed them to learn about a new culture and gain an understanding of educational- and career-related differences between Spain and the US.

"I was most surprised to learn that there are no SLPs in the public school system in Spain, even though that is such a big part of our role here in the US. Maria also told us that SLPs are less recognized as a profession in Spain and they often get confused with 'foot doctors'. It made me realize how much the role of an SLP is shaped by the culture and systems of the country where you practice."

- Hana Dussan, Incoming 2nd year MS-SLP Student



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

SUNSHINE PLACE INFOPALOOZA

Sunshine Place Infopalooza is an annual community event hosted by Sun Prairie's Sunshine Place. They invite organizations to share valuable resources with families, while providing free food, a live DJ, and fun activities! LAB Lab had the exciting opportunity to attend this event and share the work we do at the Waisman Center! It was so rewarding to connect with various families and to highlight upcoming opportunities to become involved with our research. We look forward to future additional occasions to connect with the Madison area community!



FARMERS' MARKET

LAB Lab had a summer filled with connecting with children and caregivers at various events in the Madison area. LAB members enjoyed spending time recruiting participants at the Dane County Farmers' Market this summer with a beautiful view of the capitol!



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

UTEP STUDENTS VISIT MADISON

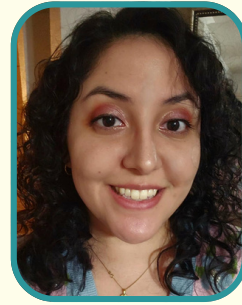
Through Project Bridging Voices: University of Texas-El Paso and UW-Madison Exchange, UTEP speech-language pathology masters students joined the UW campus for a three-week intensive research program. UTEP students had a busy time in Madison, filled with attending the Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders (SRCLD) and joining labs within the UW Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders.

LAB Lab was excited to welcome Aiime Duarte to the team! While in LAB, Aiime learned about eye-tracking protocols and procedures and worked closely with PhD candidate Chenelle Walker on her independent project called "No Sabo." Aiime is interested in exploring the biases of speech-language pathology graduate students, especially biases that they may be unaware of. Aiime assesses how graduate students' language dominance and language acquisition order can affect their confidence in providing treatment to clients that may speak the same or a different language. Aiime's findings demonstrate that graduate students typically feel more comfortable treating in their dominant language. We look forward to her future project directions and are grateful for the time she spent on the team!



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

LET'S CHAT WITH AIIME!



HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE IN MADISON?

"I loved working in the LAB Lab because everyone was so kind & welcoming and I was able to see how research is conducted in a larger university. During my time at Wisconsin, I was also able to see the different perspectives on bilingualism both at the Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders (SRCLD) and at UW."

WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN YOUR PROJECT?

"I did the 'No Sabo' project because I became curious about the perspectives my cohort had on language dominance and if that had any effect on their confidence level for treatment."

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM LAB?

"My favorite memory is seeing the different projects happening at the LAB Lab and also seeing everyone prepare for SRCLD because it showed how much everyone cared about research and worked together on different projects, as well as seeing the collaboration of colleagues at UW."

CONFERENCES

SYMPOSIUM ON RESEARCH IN CHILD LANGUAGE DISORDERS

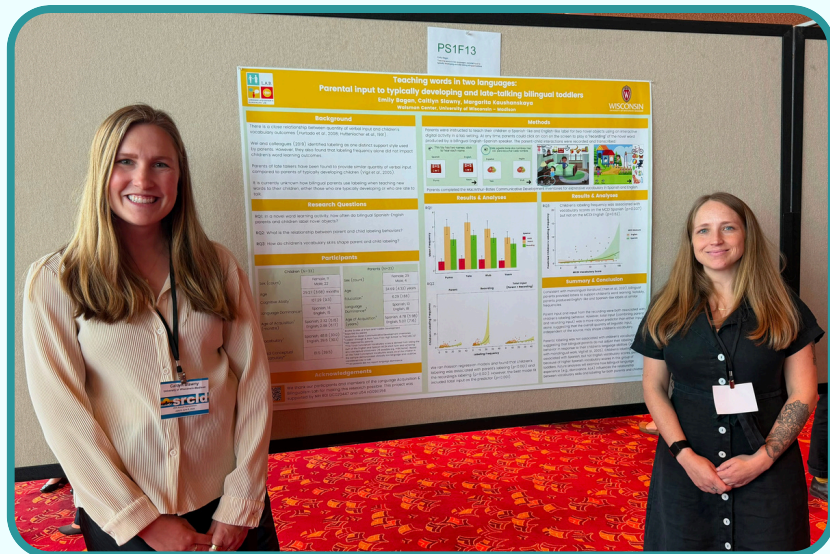
The 46th annual Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders (SRCLD) was held June 4-6, 2026, at Monona Terrace! It was an exciting weekend for LAB Lab, with Dr. Kaushanskaya serving as Conference Director alongside Dr. Sterling and LAB Lab members presenting five posters! Overall, everyone in LAB Lab did a wonderful job presenting their research! We are so proud of their hard work and look forward to seeing how these projects continue to develop.

TEACHING WORDS IN TWO LANGUAGES: PARENTAL INPUT TO TYPICALLY DEVELOPING AND LATE-TALKING BILINGUAL TODDLERS

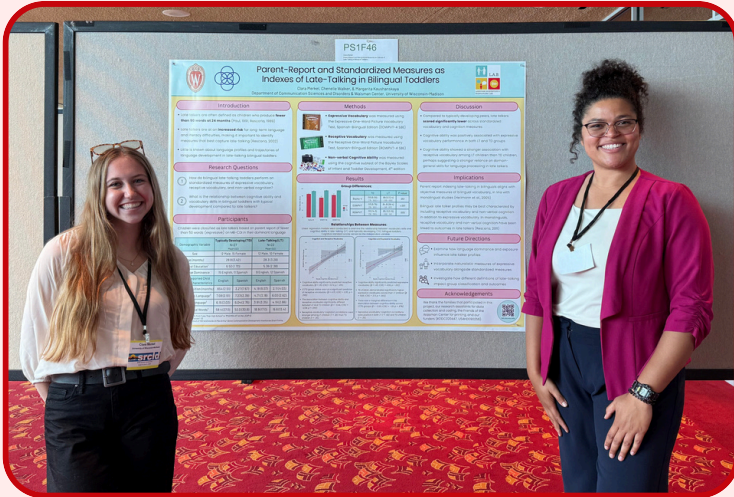
EMILY BAGAN & CAITLYN SLAWNY

Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders

PhD candidates Emily Bagan and Caitlyn Slawny's project examines how bilingual English-Spanish toddlers and their parents use language and choose words to label objects. Emily and Caitlyn's findings highlight how the amount and frequency of parental language input can vary, which is especially important because parental language input plays an important role in children's vocabulary development.



CONFERENCES



PARENT-REPORT AND STANDARDIZED MEASURES AS INDEXES OF LATE-TALKING IN BILINGUAL TODDLERS

CLARA MERKEL & CHENELLE WALKER

Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders

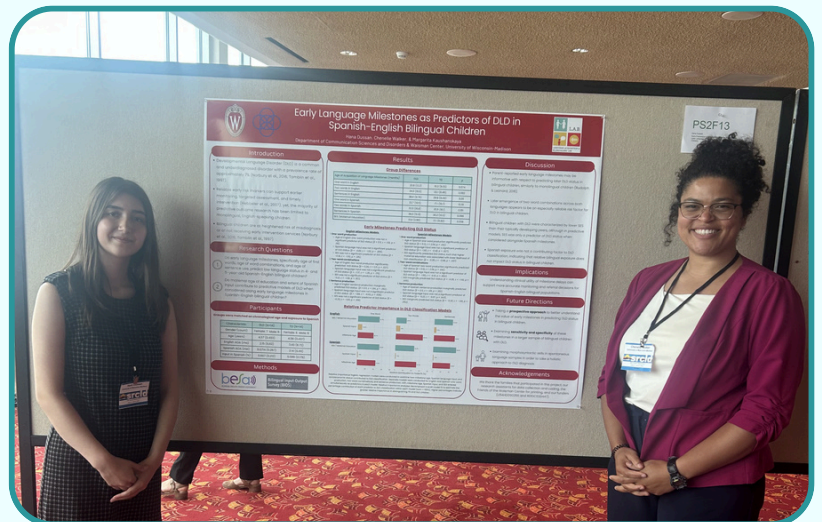
LAB Lab Research Specialist Clara Merkel and PhD candidate Chenelle Walker examine the language profiles

of Spanish-English bilingual toddlers. Preliminary findings suggest that toddlers with late language emergence score lower than typically developing peers on vocabulary measures, although not all children show clinically low expressive vocabulary scores. These findings highlight the importance of considering differences in children's language experiences when identifying bilingual children who may be late to talk.

EARLY EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE MILESTONES AS PREDICTORS OF LATER LANGUAGE OUTCOMES IN SPANISH-ENGLISH BILINGUAL CHILDREN

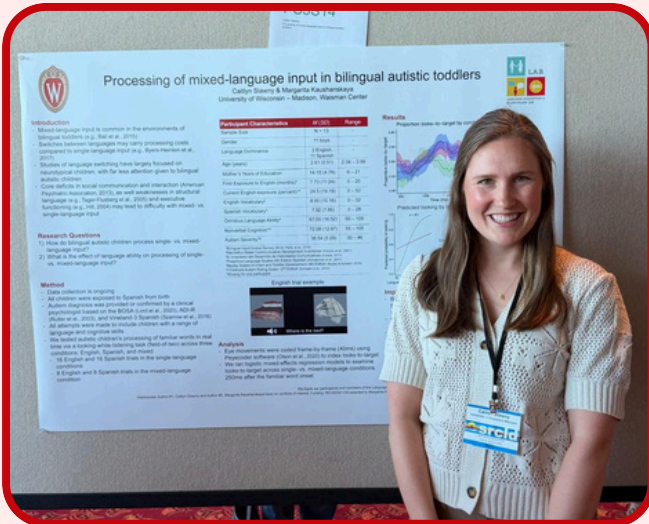
HANA DUSSAN & CHENELLE WALKER

Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders



Incoming second-year MS-SLP student Hana Dussan, mentored by PhD candidate Chenelle Walker, investigates whether early expressive language milestones can predict later language difficulties in Spanish-English bilingual children. Because bilingual children with Developmental Language Disorder may be at increased risk of misdiagnosis or delays in receiving early intervention, this research may help improve early identification of children who are at risk for language difficulties.

CONFERENCES



PROCESSING OF MIXED-LANGUAGE INPUT IN BILINGUAL AUTISTIC TODDLERS

CAITLYN SLAWNY

Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders

Previous research suggests that switching between languages can place additional demands on bilingual speakers, while autistic individuals may experience differences in social-pragmatic

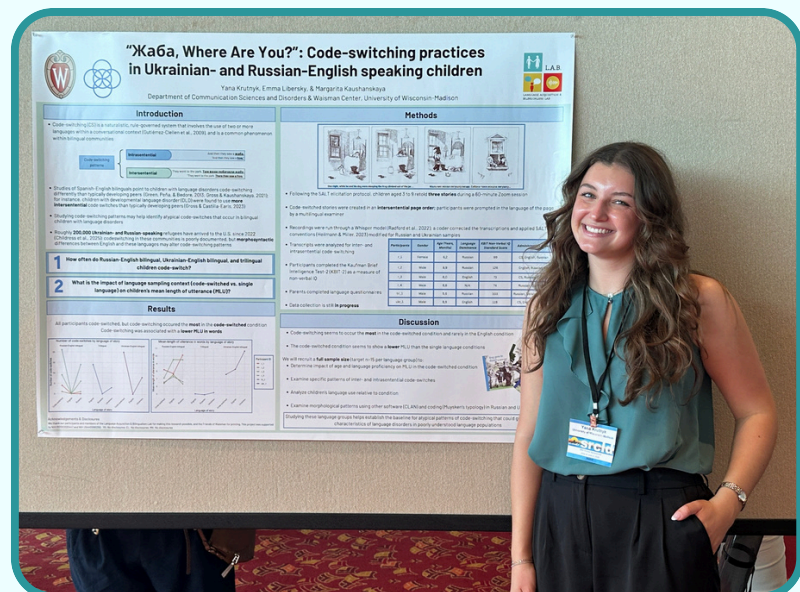
communication and executive functioning. PhD Candidate Caitlyn Slawny's research examines how English-Spanish bilingual autistic toddlers process English, Spanish, and mixed-language input. So far, participants have successfully matched words with objects when hearing English or Spanish, but performed at chance when hearing mixed-language input. This study may help inform language exposure strategies for bilingual autistic children.

FROG WHERE ARE YOU?: CODE-SWITCHING PRACTICES IN UKRAINIAN- AND RUSSIAN-ENGLISH SPEAKING CHILDREN

YANA KRUTNYK & EMMA LIBERSKY

Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders

Incoming first-year MS-SLP student Yana Krutnyk, mentored by recently graduated Dr. Emma Libersky, examines how bilingual children use code-switching while listening to and retelling three stories: once in English, once in Russian or Ukrainian, and once using both languages. This study documents typical code-switching patterns in these understudied bilingual populations, which may ultimately help researchers and clinicians identify atypical patterns associated with language impairments.



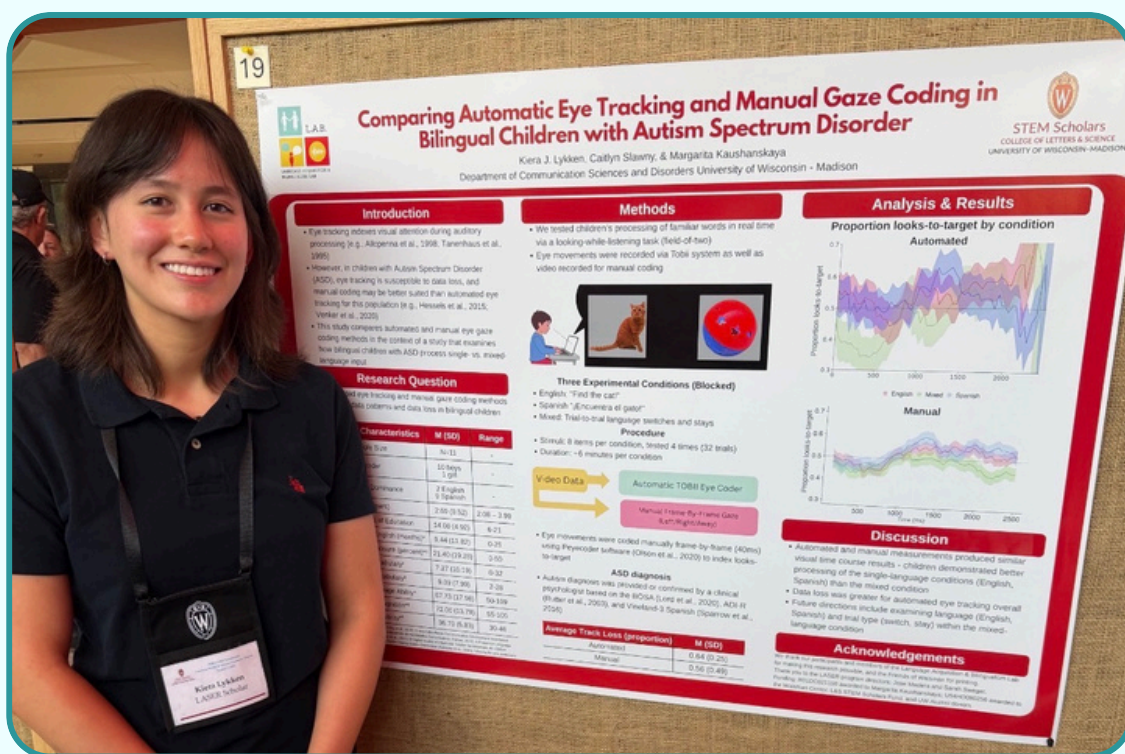
LETTERS & SCIENCE SUMMER OF EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM



Through The UW-Madison Letters & Science Summer of Excellence in Research (LASER), incoming second year undergraduate Kiera Lykken worked in the LAB Lab for eight weeks and strengthened skills relating to research project design and methodology, while also working on her project

relating to eye-tracking with mentorship from PhD candidate Caitlyn Slawny. At the end of the program, Kiera presented the LASER Symposium and discussed her project, "Comparing Automated Eye Tracking And Manual Gaze Coding In Bilingual Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder." Kiera compares automated and manual eye gaze coding methods to examine if manual coding is better suited than automated eye tracking for children with ASD, whose eye tracking is susceptible to data loss. This study furthers

identification of best practice for eye-tracking, especially when working with children with ASD and when assessing multiple languages. We are so happy to have Kiera on the LAB team and look forward to future project directions!



LAB LAB SPOTLIGHTS

EMMA LIBERSKY: DISSERTATION CELEBRATION

We congratulate Emma on successfully defending her dissertation, "Listening to and Learning from Disfluent Speech in Children with and without Developmental Language Disorder." Throughout her years in the lab, Emma has been a spectacular researcher and mentor, always inspiring and helping those around her. It was incredible to see the culmination of her hard work! She will be greatly missed, but we celebrate her next chapter as a postdoctoral researcher at Boys Town Research Hospital co-mentored by Dr. Lisa Goffman, Dr. Katherine Gordon, and Dr. Justin Kueser.



SARA DONOSO: RESEARCH SPECIALIST



Congratulations to Sara Donoso on accepting her position as a LAB Lab research specialist!

Sara graduated in Spring 2026 from UW, where she studied communication sciences & disorders and psychology with certificates in education & educational services and in global cultures, languages, & education. Sara worked as an undergraduate research assistant at LAB, so we are very excited to have her stay on the team! We look forward to continuing to see Sara thrive in this role!

CONNECTING WITHIN LAB

BUTTER BIRD SOCIAL

LAB Lab research assistants enjoyed meeting for dinner at Butter Bird! This was a great opportunity for RAs to connect socially and share their summer adventures.



To wrap up the summer and kick off the fall semester, we held our annual “Project Blitz,” where we shared overviews of the many projects and opportunities within LAB. We are so excited to welcome new and returning LAB members and look forward to another successful semester!

PROJECT BLITZ



CURRENT RESEARCH

CHILD RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES!

We have a lot of studies going on right now! We are recruiting **children ages 4-9 years** who speak:

- English
- Spanish
- Mandarin
- Ukrainian
- Russian
- African American English (AAE)

Learn about how your child understands and uses language!

BILINGUAL TODDLER RESEARCH

We are recruiting toddlers who hear Spanish for studies on how bilingual children learn language!

Do you have concerns about autism?

Toddlers play games and complete language tasks with caregiver and researchers! Receive a complete autism evaluation with a licensed bilingual psychologist.

Age: 24-35 months
Earn: up to \$210 in gift card
Sessions: 4-6
Location: Waisman Center

Do you have concerns about late talking?

Watch videos, and complete language tasks with your toddler! Opportunity to speak with a bilingual speech-language pathologist.

Age: 24-35 months
Earn: up to \$45 in gift card
Sessions: 2
Location: Waisman Center or via Zoom

Have no concerns, but want to learn about your child's language development?

Learn more about how your child uses language by looking at pictures and playing language games.

Age: 18-35 months
Earn: up to \$120 in gift card
Sessions: 2-4
Location: Waisman Center or via Zoom

If you are interested in participating, please email us or fill out our Interest Form [here](https://redcap.link/lablab), redcap.link/lablab, or scan the QR code.



THANK YOU!



Thank you all for your continued support! We are excited to see what fall brings, and we hope to see you at events or within the lab!

As always feel free to reach out to us by email, uwbilingualism@waisman.wisc.edu, or phone, (608) 263-5764.

