



## SOAS Linguistics Webinars

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# Strategic Responses in Language Use and Ethnolinguistic Reasoning to Changing Socio-Ecologies: Insights from the Yucatec Maya

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**Speaker: Cecilia Padilla-Iglesias**  
(Institute of Anthropology,  
University of Zurich)

**Date: 28 July, 4PM (London time)**



Language is the human universal mode of communication, and is dynamic and constantly in flux to accommodate user needs as individuals interface with the changing world around them. However, we know surprisingly little about how language users respond to rapidly changing socio-ecological landscapes, both now and throughout our evolutionary history. In this talk, I will discuss to what extent humans can strategically adapt the way they use, transmit and even reason about language and linguistic identities in ways that are useful in dynamic environments. I will present longitudinal work from Yucatec Mayan communities throughout a period comprising the transition to a market economy and increased contact with Spanish-speaking towns. I will provide evidence that our flexible developmental processes allow us to use languages as tools for responding adaptively to social information around us. By exploring the ways in which we do so, I will discuss the possibility of predicting the circumstances under which indigenous language use may be sustained and equally those under which it might be at risk when coming into contact with majority languages.

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