

AIA30 "Experiment and Innovation: Branching Forwards and Backwards"

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Seminar: "English as a contact language for minority and vulnerable groups"

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Abstract

"The term 'vulnerability' stems from the Latin word *vulnus* (wound) or *vulnerare* (to be wounded) and describes the potential for someone to be harmed physically and/or psychologically" (Virág 2015: 77). This potential exposure to harm may depend on several factors – including language – which do not add up but act as multipliers of vulnerability. In a world characterised by mobility and migration, English is increasingly used as a lingua franca in interaction between speakers of the outer and expanding circles (Kachru 1997), often with language mediation/interpreting, which in turn may introduce an additional layer of vulnerability (Fontes 2008, Anderson 2012). The aim of this panel is investigating the use of English as lingua franca in communication involving vulnerable subjects. To this end, we welcome contributions that:

- analyse how multiple vulnerability emerges throughout interactions in ELF taking place in different institutional (and non-institutional) settings;
- examine if and how language mediation/interpreting in interactions involving ELF reduces or enhances vulnerability in different institutional (and non-institutional) settings;
- explore perceptions of vulnerability in ELF interactions by service providers, users, and language mediators/interpreters;
- illustrate how new speakers of English variously appropriate the language to perform daily routines and deal with socially-constructed hierarchies and boundaries.

References

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- Virág, György (2015). "Interpreted Interviews with Highly Vulnerable Children". In Katalin Balogh and Heidi Salaets (eds) *Children and Justice: Overcoming Language Barriers*. Cambridge/Antwerp/Portland: Intersentia, 77-93.