



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

DIPARTIMENTO
DI PSICOLOGIA
"RENZO CANESTRARI"

PhD Program in Psychology

Seminar "Psychological Research in Multilingual and Multicultural Worlds: Identifying and Managing Bias"

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07/05/2026, 9:00 – 13:00

Aula Magna Via Filippo Re n.10 Bologna

Abstract

This seminar will present the *APA Multicultural Guidelines*, with a particular focus on their implications for research practices. Special attention will be devoted to studies involving linguistically diverse and multilingual populations, highlighting the conceptual, methodological, and ethical challenges that arise when conducting research across different language backgrounds. A central component of the seminar will focus on potential sources of bias in cognitive testing within multilingual contexts. The discussion will examine how factors such as linguistic and cultural background, as well as task-specific linguistic demands, may systematically influence performance and lead to misinterpretations of cognitive functioning. Emphasis will be placed on construct validity and on the risk of conflating linguistic differences with cognitive outcomes when assessment tools are not adequately adapted for multilingual individuals. In addition, the seminar will review selected empirical studies investigating the relationship between environmental factors, such as language exposure and sociocultural context, and cognitive processes. These findings will be discussed in relation to current debates on culturally responsive research design.

The seminar will address the following key questions:

1. How can the APA Multicultural Guidelines inform research design and interpretation when working with multilingual and linguistically diverse populations?
2. What types of bias are most likely to emerge in cognitive testing in multilingual contexts, and how can researchers minimize the risk of misinterpretation?
3. How do environmental and linguistic factors interact with cognitive processes, and what are the implications for research validity and cross-population comparisons?

Suggested reading:

American Psychological Association (2017). *Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality*. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/multicultural-guidelines.pdf>