Los Angeles, as an epicenter of the Armenian diaspora, nourishes a dynamic community of Armenian language speakers and learners. Consequently, the city accounts for a robust enrollment in Armenian day schools and language classes at the college level. The Armenian community is uniquely heterogeneous, differing in terms of country of origin, time of immigration, socioeconomic status, and linguistic standard or dialect. A significant demographic shift has been the recent increase in the number of speakers of Eastern Armenian, resulting in higher enrollments of Eastern Armenian students in day schools. In this context, the Eastern Armenian student faces a unique situation, as Western Armenian functions as the primary language of instruction for the Armenian curriculum in Los Angeles Armenian schools.

This presentation examines the experience of a growing number of heritage language speakers, for whom the home variant of the heritage language differs from the standard taught at school. The goal is to highlight the dynamic nature of a pluricentric language in a diasporic context. Unique instructional problems emerge for heritage speakers who have partially or fully acquired one variant of a language but find themselves in a classroom where another standard is taught. To address the difficulties, the process of second dialect acquisition (SDA), which involves the learning of a new variety of the same language, has to be fully understood. After surveying the growing body of work on SDA, this presentation will apply the findings to Armenian in a diasporic context and make concrete recommendations. Most importantly, Dr. Karapetian will argue that the natural sociolinguistic variation in the pluricentric manifestation of Armenian should not be seen as a problem but as a resource.

Dr. Karapetian’s talk is part of an effort by the Society for Armenian Studies to open a discussion on Western Armenian as highlighted by its latest publication - *Western Armenian in the 21st Century: Challenges and New Approaches* (Fresno, CA: The Press at Fresno State, 2018) edited by Bedross Der Matossian and Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

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