



**Thursday,  
June 2, 2022  
3:00 p.m.**

McCormick Auditorium,  
Norris University Center  
1999 Campus Drive, Evanston

And online: <https://tinyurl.com/sedivy>

Reception to follow

Free and open to the public.  
No tickets or reservations  
required.

For more information, contact  
[linguistics@northwestern.edu](mailto:linguistics@northwestern.edu)  
or call 847-491-7020

# Julie Sedivy

**Writer and Language Scientist**

## *What if we admit we love our languages?*

*American society holds deeply ambivalent attitudes toward the learning of foreign languages. On one hand, other languages are recognized as valuable skills in a global economy; on the other hand, they are seen as potential threats to national identity and unity. In other words, we would like Americans to be able to speak other languages, but not to be emotionally attached to them. This ambivalence percolates throughout institutions and policies, with consequences that range from educational inefficiencies to the alienation of immigrants from their families of origin.*

*I suggest an alternative to the cautious utilitarianism that dominates many discussions of multilingualism. What if we were to whole-heartedly acknowledge and support the ways in which the lives and psyches of many Americans are deeply entangled with other languages? How would this change educational practices and policies? And what benefits would we reap for individuals, communities, and society at large? I argue that among other payoffs, nurturing a healthy multilingualism—one that values emotional ties to more than one linguistic and cultural group—can serve as an antidote to a toxic culture of conflict and polarization precisely because it fosters a complicated sense of identity that transcends rigid allegiance to a single group.*