

## Student Feature: Maya Kraidy

**Maya Kraidy (she/her)**

**WCAS '26 (Cognitive  
Science & Linguistics)**

**Circumnavigator**

We're so excited to announce our 2025 Circumnavigator Awardee, Maya Kraidy! Maya will receive \$10,000 to travel to five countries this summer to research indigenous language revitalization efforts.



**Please provide a brief summary of what you plan to research over the summer, where you plan to go, and why you chose those locations.**

This summer, I'll be researching how linguistic landscapes (public signs, billboards, graffiti, etc.) reflect and contribute to minority and indigenous language revitalization efforts across Finland, South Africa, Singapore, New Zealand, and Fiji. I'll observe public spaces, museums, and other educational spaces to understand how minority languages are represented and how this impacts accessibility in multilingual societies. Although these countries are linguistically diverse, they all share the common challenge of preserving minority indigenous languages that struggle to survive amid the dominance of English and other languages associated with political and economic power. I want to uncover how language revitalization policies translate into real-world change and influence the visibility and use of minority languages in daily life.

**What made you interested in pursuing interdisciplinary research?**

I'm drawn to interdisciplinary research because complex issues rarely have solutions that fit neatly into one field. Language, for example, is much more than a system of communication - it's deeply tied to identity, cognition, social dynamics, and power. Studying something interdisciplinarily gives you a more complete representation of how it actually functions in the real world.

**Describe your experiences with research thus far in your career.**

I'm currently a research assistant at Northwestern's SoundLab, a lab that studies the cognitive processes behind language acquisition, production, and perception, focusing on speech production. I've also previously conducted a year-long study on the effects of auditory subliminal messages in advertising.

**What made you initially interested in researching your topic in particular?**

I speak more than 3 languages at home and grew up in 4 different countries, many with incredibly linguistically diverse populations. I've witnessed the dwindling of minority languages firsthand, and through studying linguistics and cognitive science, I've gained the knowledge and tools to study this topic academically. The regions and languages I've chosen to study are severely underrepresented in the fields of language revitalization and linguistic landscapes, and they absolutely deserve to be.

**Any tips or advice you have for students interested in pursuing undergraduate research?**

Go for the opportunities that excite you! Whether it be working at a lab or creating your own research project, if you care about a certain field or topic, the opportunities are definitely out there and you lose nothing in applying. The OUR advisors are amazing!

**Which aspect of your trip are you most excited about?**

I'm most excited to meet new people, hear their stories, and visit new places!

**Do you collect anything?**

I collect patches from anywhere I go - I'm excited to add some this summer!

**What skill would you most like to learn?**

I would love to learn how to crochet better. It's such an impressive skill and I've seen some really cool projects come out of it!