

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

23-24 April 2020, Institute of Multilingualism, Fribourg

Multilingualism: Acquisition, Education, and Society
University of Fribourg | Institute of Multilingualism

Workshop: Impossible constructs? – Discussing operationalization and validation of constructs and measurement instruments in multilingualism research

Dr. Benjamin Kremmel, Universität Innsbruck

Dr. Jan Vanhove, Universität Fribourg/Freiburg

Chair: Prof. Dr. Raphael Berthele, Universität Fribourg/Freiburg

Abstract: Multilingualism/SLA researchers and language testing researchers often seem to work in parallel universes, despite similar research interest at the core of their activities. While multilingualism researchers often downplay or even ignore the relevance of measurement in their studies, language-testing researchers have been accused of paying little attention to the role of second and third language acquisition theory and findings. This is detrimental to our shared field as the two disciplines could benefit immensely from more collaboration and cross-fertilization of ideas and approaches. It seems even more important to join forces to tackle some of the constructs that have been relatively poorly defined and operationalized up to this point. While both disciplinary traditions, despite a lot of room for improvement, have a relatively good grasp on the traditional language skills and competences, such as reading, writing, listening, speaking or some of their components, the measurement of concepts like “psychotypology”, “language dominance”, “language mode”, or “metalinguistic awareness” is even more complex and fuzzy to date. This event is intended as an attempt to kickstart a renewed discussion between researchers from different areas under the assumption that each field is likely to be able to contribute to it, be it experience with validation approaches and models beyond correlational studies, theoretical considerations, sociolinguistic findings, psycholinguistic insights, or a focus on the difficult issue of pedagogical implications. We invite all researchers and practitioners interested in such potentially “impossible constructs” to debate the feasibility, the necessity, and potential possibilities of operationalizing them for research purposes.

Participation

Doctoral students of the programme's partner universities (Fribourg, Bern, and Lausanne) are eligible to participate. Students from other Swiss universities may participate depending on places available.

Registration (see page 2)

To register, please contact Dr. Naomi Shafer (naomi.shafer@unifr.ch) by April 10, 2020.

📍 www.institute-multilingualism.ch

PhD programme on Multilingualism

The event is part of the doctoral programme Multilingualism: Acquisition, Education, and Society. It is organized by the Institute of Multilingualism and the Department of Multilingualism and Foreign Language Education at the University of Fribourg and carried out in close collaboration with the Center for the Study of Language and Society of the University of Bern and with professors from the University of Lausanne.

Venue

Institute of Multilingualism, Murtengasse 24 /
Rue de Morat 24, 1700 Fribourg, Room K1.03

Preparation and registration

"BYOC: Bring Your Own Construct"

A central aim of this workshop is to look at the constructs that the participants are working on and working with in their research projects. That is, each participant should bring at least one main concept of his/her study that we will take the time to discuss. As you register for the workshop, you are thus kindly asked to hand in a max. 1-page-paper in which you reflect, among other things

- what is your (main) construct?
- what is your reason for wanting to observe / analyze / measure this construct?
- how can you or have you define(d) and operationalize(d) your construct?
- how has your construct been measured in the literature / by previous research?
- which measures could prove useful or have proven useful in the case of your study?
- what challenges could or have you experienced in the measurement of your construct?
- which questions remain open regarding the operationalization and validation of your construct?

Invited speakers

Dr. Benjamin Kremmel has been a lecturer and researcher at the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Innsbruck, since 2011. He completed his M.A. degree in Teaching at Innsbruck University and another M.A. in Language Testing at Lancaster University. He holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Nottingham, UK. From 2011 to 2013, Dr. Kremmel was involved in the development of language tests for the standardized Austrian school leaving exam project (University of Innsbruck). His research interests include L2 lexical knowledge, vocabulary assessment, L2 reading assessment, diagnostic language testing, language assessment literacy, and SLA. For more information: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Benjamin_Kremmel

Dr. Jan Vanhove is a senior lecturer at the Department of Multilingualism at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. For more information: <https://janhove.github.io/about.html>

Programme

Thursday, April 23, 2020

12.00 Arrival and lunch

13.00-16.15

Input by Jan Vanhove; discussion of Westfall / Yarkoni 2016 (see below) and constructs (BYOC)

17.15 Lecture by Benjamin Kremmel (K1.03)

Friday, April 24, 2020

9.00-12.15: Input by Benjamin Kremmel and discussion of constructs (BYOC)

Required reading

Westfall, J., & Yarkoni, T. (2016): Statistically Controlling for Confounding Constructs Is Harder than You Think. PLOS ONE, 11(3), e0152719.

Suggested reading

Purpura, J.E., Brown, J.D. & Schoonen, R. (2015): Improving the Validity of Quantitative Measures in Applied Linguistics Research. Language Learning, 65: 37-75. 10.1111/lang.12112