

PROGRAMME

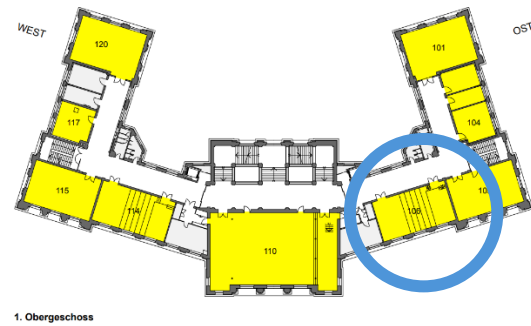
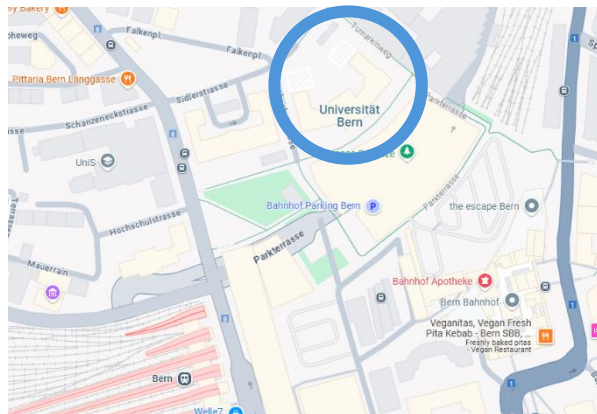
09:30 – 10:00	Coffee and Gipfeli
10:00- 10:05	Welcome
10:05- 10:25	Beatriz Duarte Gonçalves Ventura de Paula Wirth Language development in Portuguese and English multilingual immigrants in Switzerland: bridging sociolinguistic narratives and psycholinguistic models of attrition
10:25- 10:45	Esther de Leeuw, Scott Lewis, & Joséphine Dishpalli Mother tongues: First results from ultrasound analysis of bilingual babies in Lausanne, Switzerland
10:45- 11:05	Mason Wirtz Sociolinguistic development across the lifespan in the first and second language
11:05- 11:20	Coffee and Gipfeli
11:20- 11:40	Kristina Ehram English as a mediating language in German as a foreign language courses
11:40- 12:00	Gina Schaffer Accentuate your employability: Analysing the impact of native and foreign accents on hiring decisions in Switzerland
12:00- 12:20	Hikaru Hotta English comparative constructions at different levels of schematicity: What is the role of adjective-specific variability?
12:20- 13:30	Lunch – Grosse Schanze
13:30- 13:50	Rebekka Haerter Perceptions on South African English (SAFE) – Pragmatic Choice or Threat to Identity?
13:50- 14:10	Danielle Tod Kiwis, costumes, and community: An event ethnography of the annual Waitangi Day pub crawl
14:10- 14:30	Federico Erba Unravelling the language materiality of a cashmere sweater: A discourse-driven commodity chain analysis
14:30- 15:00	Charmaine Kong, Alessandro Pellanda, Crispin Thurlow, Laura Wohlgemuth Decolonializing waste: The semiotic production of “sacrifice zones”
15:00 – 15:15	Coffee
15:15 – 16:00	Business meeting

LOCATION

Room 106, Hochschulstrasse 4

Coffee breaks on ground floor, east side of the building.

Arrival from train station: When you arrive on the platform, go down into the station (not up the escalator) and walk towards platform 13. At the end of the underpass are elevators, take the elevator to the top floor.



ABSTRACTS

Language development in Portuguese and English multilingual immigrants in Switzerland: bridging sociolinguistic narratives and psycholinguistic models of attrition

Beatriz Duarte Gonçalves Ventura de Paula Wirth, Université de Lausanne

Switzerland, like other European countries, has seen increased migration in recent years. The number of resident foreigners in Switzerland, for instance, amounts to 26% of its population (SEM 2024), with the French-speaking regions welcoming the highest proportion of foreigners (Office Fédéral de la Statistique 2022). When a community undergoes a heavy migration influx, several social and linguistic issues arise. For instance, from the migrants' perspective, how do preconceived notions regarding their cultural background and L1 status impact their migration experience? Another integration challenge concerns the cognitive effects resulting from the interplay between migrants' L1 and the official language of the host community. Within this context, this talk will focus on the language development of 46 long-term bi- and multilingual immigrants around retirement age (55-75 years old) in French-speaking Switzerland. More specifically, this presentation investigates the role of typology in multilingual attrition, i.e., do speakers of typologically different languages like Portuguese and English experience language attrition differently when immersed in a French-speaking context? Therefore, this talk focuses on attrition as a function of typological differences between languages and takes a holistic approach to attrition by 1) framing attrition as clearly embedded in the broader realm of multilingualism; 2) moving away from the categorization of individual versus community and with that language shift versus attrition. Individual multilingual narratives are greatly informed by the community and environment in which they are nested, and 3) using linguistic features to illustrate how sociolinguistic information can influence psycholinguistic outcomes (see Wirth et al. 2023 for a critical discussion). Although past attrition investigations that focused on the changed repertoire of given linguistic features have adopted sociolinguistic background measures, notably attitudes, motivation

and age of onset/return (cf. Cherciov 2011; Optiz 2019; Matos and Flores 2024), a holistic approach where both life narratives and psycholinguistic attrition outcomes are directly related has not been attempted. Thus, a methodological framework that allows for the bridging of socio- and psycholinguistic approaches to attrition will be discussed and preliminary results of my study, an ongoing PhD thesis, will be presented.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Bilingual development, Crosslinguistic interaction, Language attrition, Language and migration.

References

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Mother tongues: First results from ultrasound analysis of bilingual babies in Lausanne, Switzerland

Esther de Leeuw, Scott Lewis, & Joséphine Dishpalli, University of Lausanne

When and how do bilingual babies start to produce their two languages separately? Mother Tongues investigates this question by using ultrasound tongue imaging and acoustic analyses of targeted language-specific segmental and prosodic variables to examine the extent to which bilingual infants and toddlers produce speech uniquely in their two languages. By investigating “hidden” tongue gestures- only observable through ultrasound tongue imaging but not necessary evident in the acoustic signal- combined with acoustic analyses of language specific variables in bilingual children, Mother Tongues will help to provide a new research paradigm for the analysis of bilingual baby speech.

The primary objective of Mother Tongues – currently a pilot project, which has been funded by the SNSF grant SPARK- is to determine the efficacy of ultrasound tongue imaging as a tool to study speech production in bilingual children 0-2 years of age. Ultrasound tongue imaging has never been used on this age group for the study of speech articulation. In doing so, the research questions of Mother Tongues are the following.

1. Is ultrasound a feasible tool to investigate bilingual speech in infants and toddlers 0-2 years of age?
2. What acoustic variables can be measured to investigate language specific bilingual speech in infants and toddlers 0-2 years of age?
3. Are there articulatory and acoustic signs of language specific bilingual speech in children 0-2 yrs of age?

We will present the data collection methodology which was applied in November 2024 to January 2025 to collect data from 14 babies ranging in age from 7-37 (9 babies: 7-23 months; 5 babies: 25-27 months). Moreover, we will present initial findings from the ultrasound analysis which indicate that ultrasound is a viable tool to analyse baby speech in the targeted age range. Additionally, we will present suggestions for acoustic variables which appear fruitful for future analyses using ultrasound tongue imaging and acoustic analysis for investigations into baby speech.

Sociolinguistic development across the lifespan in the first and second language

Mason Wirtz, University of Zurich

According to Eckert (1997), “life is about change” and thus “development is lifelong” (p. 157). Lifespan approaches to sociolinguistic development seek to understand continuities and discontinuities in growth and change over the whole of life. The basic tenet here is that various forms of (socio-)linguistic knowledge evolve at various points in our lives as our cognitive affordances continue to interact with our social environment (e.g., Dossey et al., 2020; Gerstenberg & Voeste, 2015; Ghimenton et al., 2021). In this talk, I will address linguistic variation and change at different points in the lifespan, specifically as concerns sociolinguistic development in the first and second language. Based on several complementary datasets (e.g., Wirtz et al., 2024; Wirtz & Pickl, 2025; Wirtz et al., in press), I aim to provide a general overview of the following questions:

- (1) To what extent can adult second language (L2) learners acquire sociolinguistic variation, and how do their patterns of vernacularity differ from or parallel those of the target-language community?
- (2) What statistical techniques can we use to model the – also spatially conditioned – nature of language variation and change?
- (3) Assuming that the linguistic repertoire is malleable throughout the whole of life, what are the factors that drive linguistic instability? What role do major life events play in shaping lifelong linguistic variability?

While the data for the proposed talk include German as the target or community language, the insights garnered hold cross-linguistic relevance and may help foster a cross-fertilization relationship between disciplines.

Literature

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English as a mediating language in German as a foreign language courses

Kristina Ehram, University of Basel

To date, the role of English as a mediating language in non-English foreign language classrooms remains a largely underexplored research area (for exceptions, see e.g. Turnbull, 2018; Schaller-Schwane, 2018). In my PhD project, I investigated the multilingual phenomenon of using English in beginner courses for German as a foreign language offered at university language centers in German-speaking Switzerland. In these courses, students and teachers draw upon their plurilingual repertoires, including English at different proficiency levels, to facilitate the teaching and learning of German. The topic of English as a mediating language was explored from multiple perspectives and by drawing on different types of data. For the present contribution, I will draw on selected transcribed excerpts from classroom recordings to discuss whether and how the use of English alongside the target language German is regulated in classroom interaction. The findings showed that the use of English is largely tolerated and even explicitly encouraged.

References

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Accentuate your employability: Analysing the impact of native and foreign accents on hiring decisions in Switzerland

Gina Schaffer, University of Bern

This study examines the impact of native and foreign accents on hiring in Switzerland, addressing accent bias as labour market discrimination. Research shows that foreign accents often correlate with lower employability ratings (Hansen & Dovidio, 2016; Hyman, 2001; Rakić & Sonnenberg, 2013). However, while Switzerland’s workforce is increasingly diverse, its anti-discrimination legislation remains limited, and employment discrimination is underexplored (Zschirnt, 2020, p. 564). Prior studies relied mainly on correspondence tests (Fibbi, Ruedin, Stünzi, & Zschirnt, 2022; Zschirnt, 2019; Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016), leaving a gap in understanding accents’ effects.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining an online survey incorporating a mixed matched- and verbal-guise experiment with employer interviews. Findings reveal significant bias: Swiss

German-accented candidates are rated most favourably, while Balkan-accented applicants face the strongest discrimination, especially in high-status roles. Understandability, status, and solidarity mediate these biases. These results highlight the need to address accent-based discrimination in Swiss hiring.

Keywords: Accent bias, native versus foreign accents, employability, language attitudes, discrimination, social identity

English comparative constructions at different levels of schematicity: What is the role of adjective-specific variability?

Hikaru Hotta, Université de Neuchâtel

This study analyzes the English comparative alternation (morphological *prouder* and periphrastic *more proud*) with regard to adjective-specific variability. Substantial empirical evidence indicates that speakers redundantly represent both abstract schemas (ADJ + *-er*) and their specific instantiations (*prouder*) as symbolic units. Against this background, we offer a re-analysis of data from Hilpert (2008), which yields new results on the basis of a mixed-effects model that incorporates individual adjectives as random effects. The results show that although most fixed effects remain significant factors in the alternation, their effect sizes are substantially reduced. Furthermore, a closer examination of random effects reveals adjective-specific variability that deviates from the general conditioning factors. These findings support the idea that competition between linguistic forms occurs across different levels of schematicity: at the schematic level, the competition is governed by probabilistic factors, while at the lexically specific level, the conventionalization of concrete forms can override these factors.

Perceptions on South African English (SAfE) – Pragmatic choice or threat to identity?

Rebekka Haerter, University of Zurich

In this paper, I would like to present preliminary findings from ethnographic interviews, conducted in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2023 and 2024. The focus lies on language attitudes of L1 speakers of Afrikaans from both the white and the coloured population groups¹. Specifically, this paper addresses the following questions:

- 1) How do L1 speakers of Afrikaans evaluate the vitality of English vis-à-vis Afrikaans in contemporary South Africa?
- 2) How do different speaker groups perceive South African English (SAfE)'s influence on their sociolinguistic identities?

In alignment with previous research (e.g. Alvarez-Mosquera 2015; Coetzee-Van Rooy 2013; Rudwick 2021), South African English is viewed both as unifying tool and as a potential threat to language diversity in South Africa. Moreover, SAfE's dominance in public spaces is perceived to affect the vitality of certain sociolinguistic group identities, raising particular concern among white Afrikaners.

References

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Kiwis, costumes, and community: An event ethnography of the annual Waitangi Day pub crawl

Danielle Tod, University of Bern

The Waitangi Day Pub Crawl is an annual event in London celebrating New Zealand's national day, attracting thousands of young New Zealanders living in the diaspora. This event provides a unique lens into diaspora identity and community dynamics in a diaspora setting. In this presentation, I recount my experience as a participant observer at the event in February 2025 including several challenges in conducting event ethnography in a mobile and highly social environment and two key insights that emerged upon initial reflection. First, the haka – historically a symbol of national identity and a climax of the annual pub crawl – was conducted under newly defined conditions, reflecting a growing awareness of cultural appropriation and the role of Māori culture in national identity. Second, the pub crawl fosters an intensified sense of community through the temporal and spatial limits on the event, the shared purpose, and donning of costumes which serve as embodied markers of national identity. Methodologically, this presentation highlights the challenges of mobile ethnography, particularly in balancing participation with observation, recording observations in a fast-paced social environment, and capturing a wide-lens perspective. Ultimately, the Waitangi Day Pub Crawl serves as a rich site for examining how identity and belonging are negotiated in a diaspora community.

Unravelling the language materiality of a cashmere sweater: A discourse-driven commodity chain analysis

Federico Erba, University of Bern

Clothing is not only central to people's identities and relations, but also a major site of symbolic and material power (Owyong, 2009). Against this backdrop, this presentation is organized around a discourse-centered commodity chain analysis (see Thurlow, 2020) focusing on a single item of clothing representing the height of contemporary fashion: the ZEGNA Oasi Cashmere sweater. This project closely aligns with research by Graber (2023), which identifies cashmere as an ideal commodity for studying the link between language and materiality (cf. also Shankar & Cavanaugh, 2012). The project is designed around three types of primary and secondary data: (A) mapping the commodity chain, (B) ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, and (C) textual analysis of mediatized texts. The data generation takes me from Mongolian goats to yarn mills in Tuscany, knitwear factories in Piedmont, and high-end fashion stores in Switzerland. For analyzing the generated data, I combine social semiotic analysis, discourse analysis, and multi-sited visual ethnographic fieldwork. At each point along the commodity chain my focus is on the discursive production of value (cf. Graber, 2023). In this way, I demonstrate how the value of a ZEGNA Oasi Cashmere sweater develops in variable and often obscure ways depending on the individuals handling and assembling the commodity. The findings underline that the cashmere sweater's value does not solely derive from its material properties but represents a language-material accomplishment. The employment of language develops along the commodity chain: from being hardly used in artisans' work, to representing valuable work for wordsmiths in the mediatized realm.

Keywords: discourse-centered commodity chain analysis; fashion; language materiality; social semiotics; documentary regimes; political economy.

Decolonializing waste: The semiotic production of “sacrifice zones”

Charmaine Kong, Alessandro Pellanda, Crispin Thurlow, Laura Wohlgemuth, University of Bern

This presentation addresses a standing political-economic concern in discard studies: the need to “decenter” waste by surfacing its externalities (Liboiron & Lepawsky, 2022). In other words, waste is never simply or conveniently “matter out of place”. In this regard, and drawing on our current project about the sociolinguistics of waste, we demonstrate how waste is structured by predetermined regimes of value. Specifically, we offer four empirical vignettes in which waste is represented and otherwise discursively produced according to colonial logics and rhetorics. Starting with Switzerland, Vignette 1 (Pellanda) opens with a stark demonstration of the way Switzerland repeatedly conceals and/or disavows the “away” in its relentless throwing away. Vignette 2 (Thurlow) considers how imagined elsewherees are romantically and disingenuously staged in exhibitions about contemporary “throwaway” culture. Turning to on-the-ground practices, Vignette 3 (Kong) documents how waste management in Hong Kong is organized through a raciolinguistic othering of local ethnic minorities. Finally, Vignette 4 (Wohlgemuth) returns to Switzerland with interview data from secondhand shops revealing the reproduction of colonial imaginaries in everyday talk. Collectively, we thus reiterate how otherwise mythologized wasting systems hinge on the discursive production of “sacrifice zones” (Lerner, 2012; cf. Davies, 2019) which, real or imagined, are always conveniently elsewhere.

References

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