

SWELL 2026

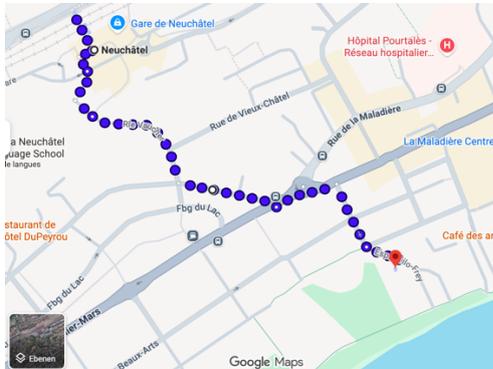
6 March, Université de Neuchâtel

Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Espace Tilo-Frey 1, RS.38

09h30-10h00	Café-Croissant
10h00-10h05	Welcome
10h05-10h25	Zeynep Köylü The Long-Term Impact of Study Abroad on Linguistic Proficiency, Intercultural Competence, and Plurilingualism
10h25-10h45	Audrey Ziehli Comprehending bilingual police prejudices: Far-right memes and L2 readability
10h45-11h05	Lou Odermatt An argumentative approach to deniability: theoretical and experimental considerations
11h05-11h30	Pause-café
11h30-11h50	Alan Lombardini, Giulia Giunta, Diana Mazzarella, and Didier Maillat Detecting Misinformation in a Second Language: Effects of At-Issue-ness and Disfluency
11h50-12h10	Jolina Saliquini, Simone E. Pfenninger, Martin Meyer, and Nathalie Giroud Micro- and Macro-Linguistic Indicators of Neurodegeneration
12h10-12h30	Annika Rosmanith, Mason Wirtz, Lukas Zbinden, and Simone Pfenninger L2 learner journeys across retirement: A longitudinal mixed-methods study
12h30-13h30	Lunch
13h30-13h50	Marina Berts Stitched Words and Silent Voices: Embroidery as Female Literacy in Late Modern England
13h50-14h10	Simona Nisticò Translating Conflict: Swearing and Insults in English, French, and Italian Short Fiction
14h10-14h30	Beatriz Duarte Ventura Living Multilingualism: Examining The Lived Multilingual Experiences of L1 Portuguese and L1 English Immigrants in Switzerland: Bridging Sociolinguistic Experiences and Psycholinguistic Models of Language Development and Attrition
14h30-15h00	Pause-café
15h00-15h45	Business meeting

Location

Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Espace Tilo-Frey 1, RS.38



Abstracts

Zeynep Köylü (UniBas): The Long-Term Impact of Study Abroad on Linguistic Proficiency, Intercultural Competence, and Plurilingualism

Studying abroad (SA) is a transformative experience with key implications for language development, intercultural competence, and attitudes towards linguistic diversity. However, the positive outcomes of SA in second language acquisition is mostly investigated in terms of its immediate effects. Our understanding of its long-term impact thus remains remarkably limited, particularly overlooking English as a Lingua Franca contexts (Köylü & Tracy-Ventura, 2022). Addressing this major gap, LINC aims to examine the long-term effects of SA on Swiss pre-service teachers' linguistic development, intercultural competence, and orientations toward plurilingualism among Swiss pre-service teachers. It adopts a longitudinal, interdisciplinary approach to investigate whether and how SA-related gains are maintained in the long-run, and later transferred into future teaching practices. Surprisingly, SA is a degree requirement for Swiss language teacher education programs, but there is a lack of systematic evidence of their lasting value. By linking SA experiences to teacher training and practices, LINC aims to inform relevant policy and strengthen the sustainability and impact of international mobility programs in Switzerland.

Köylü, Z., & Tracy-Ventura, N. (2022). Learning English in today's global world: A comparative study of at home, anglophone, and lingua franca study abroad. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 44(5), 1330-1355. doi:10.1017/S0272263121000917

Audrey Ziehli (UZH): Comprehending bilingual police prejudices: Far-right memes and L2 readability

The far-right uses disparagement humor (DH) to spread prejudiced ideologies (Schmid et al., 2024), while DH normalizes prejudice tolerance (Ford et al., 2015). Suspended Frankfurt

police involved in the far-right chat *Itiotentreff* are subject to disciplinary action for sharing DH memes in English ($n = 175$), German ($n = 228$), and German/English ($n = 28$). Judging the content severity requires L2 English competencies of L1 German authorities. As topic impacts L2 readability (Pulido, 2007), this study explores relationships between DH target, language, and readability in the *Itiotentreff* Corpus (2024). Metrics obtained with Text Inspector (Bax, 2012) classify English-language data at CEFR levels A1-A2. Women and people with disabilities/illness are most frequently targeted. Statistical testing shows a significant relationship between topic and language in monolingual memes but no significant topical differences in CEFR classifications. This paper contributes to L2 readability assessment methods necessitated by recurrent German police involvement in extremist chats.

Bax, S. (2012). Text Inspector. *Online text analysis tool*. <https://textinspector.com/>
Ford, T. E., Richardson, K., & Petit, W. E. (2015). Disparagement humor and prejudice: Contemporary theory and research. *Humor*, 28(2), 171-186.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/humor-2015-0017>

Itiotentreff Corpus. (2024). [Unpublished data set].

Pulido, D. (2007, March). The effects of topic familiarity and passage sight vocabulary on L2 lexical inferencing and retention through reading. *Applied Linguistics*, 28(1), 66–86.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/aml049>

Schmid, U. K., Schulze, H., & Drexel, A. (2024, April 10). Memes, humor, and the far right's strategic mainstreaming. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1-20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2329610>

Lou Odermatt (UniFR): An argumentative approach to deniability: theoretical and experimental considerations

In this paper, I theoretically and experimentally justify the relevance of a pragmatic and argumentative approach to deniability. To do so, I investigate the influence of the denial's internal structure on its plausibility. *Full-fledged* denials (see Mazzarella (2023)) are structured in two parts: an objection to meaning attributed (OMA) and an alternative meaning (AM). I defend two related claims: (i) the plausibility of the AM influences the plausibility of the denials; (ii) denials have an argumentative function. To support these claims, I conducted two experiments. The results of the first suggest that the plausibility of the AM influences the denial's plausibility, its speaker's image, and the relation between the OMA and the AM. The results of the second support the hypothesis of an argumentative function in denials. This approach, which combines pragmatics with insights from argumentation theory, allows us to identify crucial parameters to explain the plausibility of denials.

Mazzarella, D. (2023). "I didn't mean to suggest anything like that!": Deniability and context reconstruction. *Mind & Language*, 38(1), 218–236.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12377>

Alan Lombardini, Giulia Giunta, Diana Mazzarella, and Didier Maillat (UniFR/UniNE):

Detecting Misinformation in a Second Language: Effects of At-Issue and Disfluency

This project investigates the L2 effect on misinformation detection. Giunta et al. 2025 have shown that at-issue content is processed differently from not-at-issue content. We aim to extend this to L2 processing, exploring how *disfluency* influences misinformation detection. As L2 processing increases effort, we hypothesize that disfluency will disrupt the allocation of cognitive resources during interpretation. We present two competing hypotheses. First, increased processing effort in L2 blur the distinction between at-issue and not-at-issue content, leading to an even treatment of information. Alternatively, higher pressure on processing efforts may trigger a reallocation of cognitive resources toward maximizing relevance. We adapt a misinformation detection task from Giunta et al. (2025). Participants read a contextual story and are then presented with a dialogue between a policeman and an informant. Their task is to assess the truthfulness of the informant's answer. We measure Accuracy and the Reaction Times. Results will be presented.

Jolina Saliquini, Simone E. Pfenninger, Martin Meyer, and Nathalie Giroud (UZH): Micro- and Macro-Linguistic Indicators of Neurodegeneration

Aging affects both micro- and macro-linguistic processes, with older adults showing difficulties in word finding (Albert et al., 2009), grammatical processing (Shadden, 1997), off-topic verbosity, unfinished thoughts, and reduced cohesive markers (e.g. Marini et al., 2005). Such subtle discourse changes may signal early neurodegeneration (Ahmed et al., 2013); however, most research has focused on isolated linguistic measures rather than their integrated role in discourse production. This study examines picture descriptions from 42 older Swiss German speakers with cognitive status from healthy to Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). Using generalized additive models, we analyzed lexical diversity, syntactic complexity, fluency, accuracy, and macrostructural discourse. MCI was associated with reduced fluency, lower accuracy, and discourse-level impairments, while lexical diversity and syntactic complexity were largely preserved. From a clinical perspective, reduced fluency and discourse quality may therefore serve as early behavioral markers of cognitive decline, supporting the identification and longitudinal monitoring of MCI.

Ahmed, S., Haigh, A.-M. F., de Jager, C. A., & Garrard, P. (2013). Connected speech as a marker of disease progression in autopsy-proven Alzheimer's disease. *Brain* 136(12), 3727–3737. <https://doi.org/10.1093/brain/awt269>

Albert, M. L., Spiro III, A., Sayers, K. J., Cohen, J. A., Brady, C. B., Goral, M., & Obler, L. K. (2009). Effects of Health Status on Word Finding in Aging. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society (JAGS)*, 57(12), 2300–2305. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-5415.2009.02559.x>

Marini, A., Boewe, A., Caltagirone, C., & Carlomagno, S. (2005). Age-related Differences in the Production of Textual Descriptions. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 34(5), 439–463. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-005-6203-z>

Shadden, B. B. (1997). Discourse Behaviors in Older Adults. *Seminars in Speech and Language*, 18(2), 143–156. <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-2008-1064069>

Annika Rosmanith, Mason Wirtz, Lukas Zbinden, and Simone Pfenninger (UZH): L2 learner journeys across retirement: A longitudinal mixed-methods study

The study addresses the following research questions: RQ1: To what extent does the predictive power of socio-contextual, emotional, and motivational resources (L2 motivation, self-efficacy, well-being) for EFL learning change as adults transition into retirement? RQ2: What themes can be identified in older learners' accounts of their L2 learning experience during periods of significant growth across retirement? We examined 15 (9F, 6M) German-speaking adults, aged 62-64, who attended a two-year EFL course and retired during the training. Participants were assessed biweekly on socio-affect (training motivation, well-being, self-efficacy) and L2 skills (integrative L2 competence, grammatical L2 comprehension, complexity and fluency of written and oral L2 production tasks). Monthly open-ended questionnaires inquired about participants' L2 learning and retirement experiences. Preliminary findings of the GAMMs suggested that self-efficacy and well-being predict lexical richness (MTLD) dynamically over time. Overall, participants did not develop along identical paths and did not show similar patterns of L2 development across the retirement transition. Participants' accounts of classroom atmosphere and social embeddedness may explain periods of significant L2 development.

Marina Berts (Unil): Stitched Words and Silent Voices: Embroidery as Female Literacy in Late Modern England

Research on literacy in Late Modern England has largely privileged pen-and-ink writing, marginalising alternative forms of expression such as embroidered language. Yet for many lower-class women in the 18th and 19th centuries, stitching letters and texts was often the only available writing practice. This study investigates Elizabeth Parker's embroidered life narrative (Victoria & Albert Museum) and other sampler inscriptions as manifestations of female literacy, alongside Sussex relief requests from the corpus *Language of Artisans and the Labouring Poor*. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study explores how needlework functioned as a material and embodied literacy in contexts where girls' schooling offered little formal writing instruction. The aim is to position embroidered language as an additional speech-based source in historical (socio)linguistics and to interrogate dominant conceptions of literacy that rarely include practices performed by women.

Simona Nisticò (UniBas): Translating Conflict: Swearing and Insults in English, French, and Italian Short Fiction

This paper presents an analysis drawn from my PhD project on the translation of conflict in written fiction, focusing specifically on the translation of swearing, taboo language, and insults. Drawing on a corpus of short stories and their translations between English, French, and Italian—each language functioning both as source and target—the study investigates how the pragmatic force of swearing is reshaped in translation. Translation shifts are coded using three main categories: preservation, mitigation, and intensification, allowing for the

identification of recurring patterns across language pairs. Through a qualitative and contrastive analysis, the paper shows how swearing and insults play a key role in characterization and the representation of interpersonal conflict. It also provides insight into the possible correlations between the translation strategies used and the pragmatic functions of swearing, while raising questions about the role of character and translator gender, and a potentially higher tolerance of offensive language.

Beatriz Duarte Ventura (Unil): Living Multilingualism: Examining The Lived Multilingual Experiences of L1 Portuguese and L1 English Immigrants in Switzerland: Bridging Sociolinguistic Experiences and Psycholinguistic Models of Language Development and Attrition

This talk focuses on the L1 and French language development and attrition among long-term bilingual and multilingual first-generation immigrants aged 55-75 in French-speaking Switzerland. Drawing on data from 75 participants, the talk compares L1 Portuguese and L1 English speakers to examine (1) how typologically different language groups attrite in a context of immigration, and (2) how the lived multilingual experiences of L1 Portuguese and L1 English immigrants contribute to a holistic understanding of language attrition. Using a psycholinguistic test battery (C-test, verbal and letter fluency, Wug test) alongside in-depth sociolinguistic interviews on participant's lived experiences, diversity and balance of language use patterns, attitudes, and perceived group vitality, the presentation adopts a Systems Framework for Bilingualism that bridges individual multilingual experiences with community-level dynamics. Results indicate no overt attrition in the English bilinguals who performed at ceiling level and similarly to the English monolingual reference group. Moreover, the English bilinguals outperformed their Portuguese peers across all L1 and French tasks due to systematic differences in formal educational background, employment type, and perceived language prestige. Although the Portuguese bilinguals performed similarly to their monolingual reference group, they reported a stronger decrease in L1 performance and presented more overall crosslinguistic interaction than their English counterparts. These findings underscore the need (1) to move away from monolingual comparative norms in bilingualism research, (2) to combine quantitative and qualitative methods as well as more fine-grained measures such as neuroimaging and /or longitudinal approaches with behavioral measures and naturalistic data to capture the subtleties of attrition and overall language development, (3) to integrate socio- and psycholinguistic approaches to multilingual development studies of immigrant populations.

Titone, Debra A., & Tiv, Mehrgol. (2023). Rethinking multilingual experience through a Systems Framework of Bilingualism. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 26(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1366728921001127>