



Colloquium lecture by Prof. Raphael Berthele

Is Language Aptitude Part of the Positive Manifold? Exploring the Variability in Predispositions for Language Learning in Children and Adults

Individual differences in language learning have been the subject of research and language pedagogy for many decades, albeit with varying intensity and under different theoretical premises. In this talk, I will give a brief overview of how and why scholars have been interested in testing subjects' ability to learn additional languages (language aptitude, LA) in the past. In the main part of my presentation, I will discuss the results of two recent studies on LA in Switzerland.

The first study tested primary school children in German-speaking Switzerland who were learning English and French as foreign languages. I will discuss the internal dimensions of the LA construct that emerge from exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, as well as the predictive value of such individual difference variables for language proficiency.

In the second study I will discuss, we investigated LA in adults in French-speaking Switzerland (joint work with Narly Golestani and her lab). We collected both behavioural and neuroscientific measures related to LA (in a broad sense). I will focus on the behavioural tests that operationalise both language-related constructs and general cognitive abilities. I will discuss the internal dimensionality of these metrics and relate them to debates in psychology (e.g. different memory systems) and (psycho)linguistics (e.g. domain specificity vs. domain generality of LA).

In the last part of the talk, I will speculate on other interesting directions that the study of LA might take.

Prof. Raphael Berthele

University of Fribourg



**This lecture takes place at Liebiggasse 5, 1010 Vienna,
Lecture Hall G 2nd floor and will be streamed.**

Thursday, April 18, 2024; 3pm