

# Special Lectures in Waseda U.

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Sponsors: JSPS Kaken (B) n°24K00093 (S. Detey), Waseda Institute of Language and Speech Science / ことばの科学研究所, GSICCS

(1) Monday 20/04/2026 - 17h00-18h30 - Waseda Campus Buil. 11 Room-804

### On Predispositions for Multilingual Language Learning. Behavioural and Neurolinguistic Explorations of Children and Adults

Research on language aptitude (LA) shows that individuals differ considerably in their ease to learn first, foreign, second, and third/additional languages. In this talk, I start with a brief history of language aptitude (LA) research. In the main part, I discuss two recent studies that attempt to capture LA in a broad sense. The first study examines LA in Swiss primary school children learning English and French. Results reveal the internal dimensions of LA and their respective predictive values for language skills. Furthermore, I discuss social predispositions and how they relate to the other constructs in the analyses. The second study sheds light on LA in adults, drawing both on behavioral and neuroscientific metrics. Taking into account differing views on language acquisition/learning, I discuss the relationship between general cognitive and specifically linguistic abilities and language experience/multilingualism, as well as other associations within the set of metrics available.

- Berthele, R., & Udry, I. (Eds.). (2021). *Individual Differences in Early Instructed Language Learning: The Role of Language Aptitude, Cognition, and Motivation*. Language Science Press. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5378471>
- Rampinini, A., Balboni, I., Golestani, N., & Berthele, R. (2024). A behavioural exploration of language aptitude and experience, cognition and more using Graph Analysis. *Brain Research*, 1842, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brainres.2024.149109>

(2) Wednesday 22/04/2026 - 17h00-18h30 - Waseda Campus Buil. 11 Room-803

### Language Policy in Multilingual Switzerland: (Re-)Current Debates (with Special Emphasis on French)

Switzerland has four national languages (German, French, Italian, and Romansh), yet many more are used by its linguistically diverse population. In this talk, I first provide an overview of the core principles underlying Swiss multilingual language policy. I then examine current debates in key domains, including education (e.g. which languages should be taught), national institutions (e.g. language/dialect use in the Army, in parliament, or the media), and language-contact zones. Particular attention is paid to the complex relationship between the majority language (German, including Alemannic Swiss German, spoken by about 5.5 million speakers, 62% of the population) and the largest minority language, French (2 million speakers, 23%). These policy debates are analysed in light of tacit and, at times, explicitly articulated language ideologies, as well as broader cultural models of language and linguistic diversity.

Berthele, R. (2016). Demography vs. Legitimacy: Current issues in Swiss language policy. In M. P. Ronan (Ed.), *Perspectives on English in Switzerland* (pp. 27–51). Institut de Linguistique et des Sciences du Langage.

(3) Friday 24/04/2026 - 17h00-18h30 - Waseda Campus Buil. 11 Room-803

### Investigating the Foreign Language Effect in Politics: Non-Dominant Language Use and Political De-Polarization

The *foreign language effect* (FLE) refers to the phenomenon that decision making and moral reasoning differ when individuals operate in their second language (L2) rather than their first language (L1). Research has shown that using an L2 in decision tasks in laboratory settings often entails reduced emotional reactivity and more deliberate, utilitarian reasoning. In this talk I investigate the question whether the FLE may be detected in authentic social settings. I investigate whether speakers show systematic differences in emotional and evaluative language use across their L1 and L2 in spontaneous speech. I use data from ten Swiss politicians who regularly participate in televised debates in both French and German, one of which is their L1 and the other their L2. Conversational turns from televised debates were analyzed for sentiment, subjectivity, and polarizing potential using both Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools and human ratings. The analyses reveal that when operating in their L2, politicians tend to use less negative, less subjective, and less polarizing language than when speaking in their L1. As discussed by Detey (2023), the foreign language effect extends beyond laboratory tasks to spontaneous, socially embedded speech, influencing how speakers engage in debates on controversial political topics.

- Berthele, R., & Shafer, N. (2025). «Yes, I understood that in German: Wishy-washy!» Political polarization and the foreign language effect. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 13670069251398718. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069251398718>
- Detey, S. (2023). *Savons-nous vraiment parler? Du contrat linguistique comme contrat social*. Armand Colin.