

PUBLIC LECTURE

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Institute of Multilingualism | University | HEP Fribourg
Rue de Morat 24, 1700 Fribourg, room K0.02

Introducing the TAL-project: Learning, Teaching and Assessment of second foreign languages - an alignment study on oral language proficiency in the Swedish school context

Prof. Jonas Granfeldt (Lund University)
Dr. Susan Sayehli (Stockholm University)
Dr. habil. Malin Ågren (Lund University)

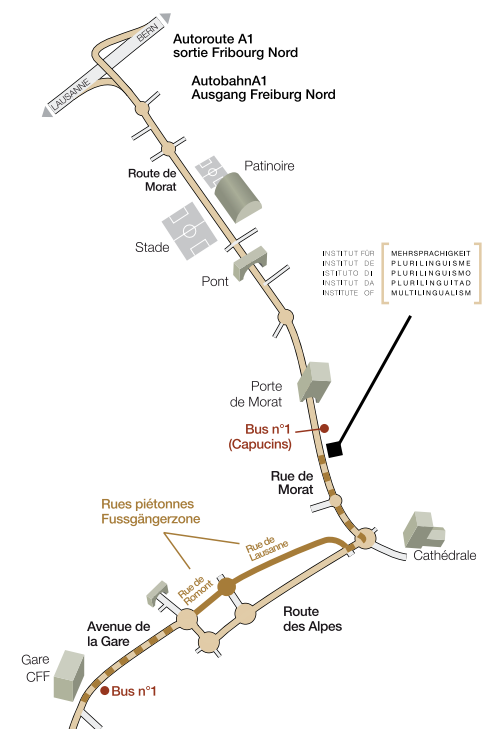
Abstract

Politicians and stakeholders widely support the “mother tongue plus two” language policy (European Commission) according to which all European citizens should be able to communicate in at least two foreign languages. However, despite high political and societal ambitions, recent reports suggest that languages other than English are suffering in Europe, and Sweden is no exception. One third of all Swedish pupils starting to study a Second Foreign Language (a SFL, *i.e.* French, German or Spanish) in lower secondary school abandon the subject within three years (Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009). In fact, SFLs are the only subjects lacking a mandatory status in the Swedish compulsory school. Moreover, according to the Eurobarometer (2012) there is a lack of motivation for learning SFLs in Sweden. For these and other reasons, SFLs are at the center of an ongoing public debate focusing on their future status in Sweden. A major drawback in this debate, however, is the lack of empirical underpinnings.

The overall aim of the TAL-project¹ (*Teaching, Assessment and Learning*) is therefore to gain a better understanding of learning conditions and outcomes in SFLs in the Swedish school context. The project, with its primary focus on oral language proficiency, is interdisciplinary and draws on research in education, language teaching, language assessment and language learning. In a first phase we have surveyed Swedish compulsory schools and collected data from two questionnaires: one to school leaders (n=147) and one to SLF teachers (n=316). In a second phase, we have visited a limited number of these schools (n=15) in order to collect interview data from school leaders (n=15) and teachers (n=48) as well as oral language production and interaction data from pupils in the 9th grade (approximately 15 years old) learning French, German or Spanish in secondary school (n=120). In this presentation, we sketch a background to the TAL-project and present the aims and the outline in more detail. In addition, we present some preliminary results from the different data sets.

¹In addition to the authors the TAL-project includes Camilla Bardel (Stockholm univ.), Gudrun Erickson (Gothenburg univ.) and Raket Österberg (Stockholm univ.). <http://www.tal.lu.se/in-english/>

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