

The Fourth International Conference on Third Language Acquisition and Multilingualism

Fribourg/Freiburg and Biel/Bienne, Switzerland,
September 8th – 10th 2005



Although multilingualism is now considered to be a common state in the world, it was not until the 1960s that bilingualism even began to be viewed as a normal phenomenon linked to the social, geographical and cultural conditions of human beings.

Thirty years later, the scope moved from bilingualism to multilingualism, defying the assumption made earlier that only quantitative, but no qualitative differences existed between bi- and multilingualism. Bilingualism was no longer seen as an intermediate stage between two types of monolingualism, but rather as a potentiality or facilitation for the learning of other languages.

At the same time, language concepts increasingly put emphasis on learning rather than on teaching, putting the individual at the centre of concern. Dynamic approaches, theories and solutions are awaited in this promising field.

A network of researchers and practitioners

In the 1990s, many researchers and scholars started to work in the challenging pluridisciplinary field of multilingualism and third/fourth language acquisition. A wide range of disciplines and topics were addressed, at the macro, meso, micro and even nano level of multilingualism and language contact. A series of international

conferences provided the ideal locus to exchange results, approaches and concerns. *The International Conference on Third Language Acquisition and Multilingualism* will this year be held at the University of Fribourg/Freiburg and in Biel/Bienne, two bilingual cities in Western Switzerland. The first elections of the *International Association of Multilingualism* (IAM) will also take place during the conference. The Association is related to the *International Journal of Multilingualism*, launched in 2004 by Multilingual Matters.

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The 2005 Conference

Alongside the parallel sessions and the colloquia, the cultural programme and the convivial time slots, the following key-note speakers will address plenaries:

- Georges Lüdi: *Early multilingualism: social representations and neurolinguistic evidence.*
- Daphné Romy-Masliah: *English and cultures: Crossroad or frontier?*
- Iwar Werlen: *Communication in a plurilingual city: The case of Biel-Bienne.*
- Yeang Lam Ruth Wong: *South-East Asia: Multilingualism for all?*

French, German and English are the official languages of the Conference, but any language is accepted for the panels and collo-

quia. Whilst plenaries not presented in English will be translated into English, presentations in the parallel sessions and colloquia will not. For presenters, this means that you have to consider that the audience is not composed only of "native listeners", you have to adapt pace and language and use contextual cues. For the audience, this means that you have to mobilise cross-linguistic and intercomprehension strategies.

Conference venue

The conference takes place at the bilingual French-German University of Fribourg/Freiburg, located in the city and the canton of the same name. During the conference, half a day will take place in another bilingual city, Biel/Bienne in the bilingual Canton of Bern, at a distance of 50 km from Fribourg/Freiburg. Beside French and German, both areas use Swiss German dialects for oral purposes, English is now a compulsory subject for all pupils, and many in-migrant languages are present in both areas, so multilingualism is a realistic in vivo situation.

Organisers and institutions

- Claudine Brohy, University of Fribourg/Freiburg (www.unifr.ch) and IRDP Neuchâtel (www.irdp.ch)
- Christine Le Pape Racine, Paperace (www.paperace.ch)
- Eva Roos, Forum du bilinguisme Bienne / Forum für die Zweisprachigkeit Biel, (www.bilinguisme.ch)

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Bienvenue en Suisse, willkommen in der Schweiz, welcome to Switzerland!