

CALL FOR POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Let the Children Speak: Learning of Critical Language Skills across 25 Languages

A European-wide initiative on Language Acquisition and Language Impairment

22 - 24 January 2010

London

COST A 33

<http://www.zas.gwz-berlin.de/cost/>

Two children in every classroom across Europe suffer from Specific Language Impairment (SLI), meaning that they have problems learning language. Language is one of the key skills that children need in order to succeed in education and in later life; without it, children may fail to reach their potential. Early assessment of language skills, to identify children who have SLI, is essential. Yet migration and multilingualism may make it difficult to assess whether children have the necessary language skills to access the school curriculum, and diagnosing SLI across Europe is a challenge.

SLI is costing Europe more than 250 billion Euros a year. That's equivalent to 1% of GDP, enough to bail out a medium-sized bank. Like the world banking crisis, it must be addressed at an international level. In a unique initiative, scientists from 25 European countries (and close neighbours), and representing 25 languages (covering the major European language families: Germanic, Romance, Slavic, Baltic, Greek and Romani and also Finno-Ugric and Semitic) have worked together to investigate the critical language skills that children need to learn. We have created an assessment that is comparable across languages, with 13 subtests that test critical skills in grammar, semantics and pragmatics. This work allows us to assess whether a child has the key language abilities needed for education and life-long learning in languages across the EU, and can serve as a template for other languages too.

This work provides the necessary platform for politicians, professionals and scientists alike to take up the reins to collaboratively address the severe socio-economic cost of our children's lost potential. We are therefore bringing together a unique team of experts from across the EU - politicians, educationalists, health specialists, scientists and parents to address this challenge at a ground-breaking international conference.

The conference aims to:

- Establish an agenda for a political and interdisciplinary European effort to address language and communication impairments, in order to help prevent the enormous socioeconomic loss that they incur.
- Communicate (and demystify) knowledge of learning of critical language abilities and their assessment across 25 languages, to facilitate the education, health and social welfare of children. In this way, children's strengths and weaknesses can be identified early, and children helped to reach their potential.
- Build on our findings, establish a way forward to how children can be helped through being better able to access life-long education and learning across all 25 languages.
- Develop a commitment from member countries to put language and communication skills at the top of the agenda for investment in research, education and health.

Keynotes:

Stephen Crain, Macquarie University, Australia

Tbc: The Hon Ed Balls, MP Secretary of State, Department of Children, Families and Schools UK Government.

Tbc: The Hon John Bercow MP, Author of the Departments of Health and Children, families and Schools UK Government "The Bercow Report 2008"

Tbc: The EU Commissioner for Science and Education

Tbc: The EU Commissioner for Multilingualism

Scientific presentations by the working groups of COST Action A33:

Heather van der Lely, Harvard University and UCL

Uli Sauerland, Centre for General Linguistics (Zas), Berlin

Angeliëk van Hout, University of Groningen

Na'ama Friedman, University of Tel Aviv

Ken Drozd, University of Aarhus

Sharon Armon-Lotem, Bar Ilan University

Spyridoula Varlokosta, University of Athens

Preliminary Program:**Friday:****14:00- 18:00**

Political and Professional (Education, Health) issues

To include interactive sessions where participants can try out the language assessments in any of the 25 languages.

Key Note: Professor Stephen Crain

Panel Discussion

18:30-22:00

Reception (wine and canapés) at the Wellcome Trust, Medicine Now Gallery

Saturday**9:00 - 18:00**

Scientific issues

Paper and discussants.

Poster and interactive sessions

19.00 Conference Dinner**Sunday****9:00 - 13.00**

Scientific issues

Papers and discussants.

13.00 Lunch and close

This conference is supported by:

- COST Action A33 <http://www.zas.gwz-berlin.de/cost/>
- The Wellcome Trust, UK.
- Centre for Developmental Language Disorders & Cognitive Neuroscience, UCL
- Department of Language and Communication Science, City University, London.
- Department of Psychology, Birkbeck, University of London
- I CAN
- AFASIC
- The Church of St Etheldreda <http://www.stetheldreda.com>
- Bleeding Heart Yard Restaurant <http://www.bleedingheart.co.uk/crypt/index.php>

Abstract submission information

Abstracts are invited for poster presentations, on any topic relating to language development and developmental language disorders. Abstracts must be written in English and include the following:

Cover Page

- Title of presentation
- Authors' names and affiliations
- Name, address, telephone number and email address of contact person

Abstract

- Title of presentation
- Summary of research undertaken (500 words maximum, single spaced)
- Do not include authors' names

Abstracts must be submitted as an attachment to an email to Angeliek van Hout, chair of the reviewing committee, at: Cost@rug.nl. The deadline for submissions is 30th September 2009, and authors will be notified of the committee's decision by 15th October.

Bursaries

A number of bursaries will be awarded to people with an accepted poster pay for conference fees and help with travel and subsistence costs. If you would like to apply for one of the bursaries to attend the conference please provide a short paragraph stating your circumstances, your areas of interest and how you think attending the conference would benefit: a) you and/or b) children with language impairment, and c) what you can bring to the conference. Please add this paragraph on a separate sheet to your abstract submission, including your name and contact details.

Full list of languages involved in A33:

Basque

Bulgarian

Catalan

Croatian

Czech

Danish

Dutch

English

Estonian

Finnish

French

German & Austrian German

Greek & Cypriot Greek

Hebrew

Italian

Lithuanian

Maltese

Norwegian

Polish

Portuguese

Romani

Romanian

Russian

Serbian

Slovak

Spanish

Swedish