

Call for Papers – Colloquium VALS-ASLA 2010

Linguistic Competences in Education and at Work. Transitions and Transformations

ZHSF, Zürcher Hochschulinstitut für Schulpädagogik und Fachdidaktik der
Universität Zürich, der ETHZ und der Pädagogischen Hochschule Zürich

Zurich, 4-6 February 2010

Plenary speakers

Jean-Paul Bronckart, Université de Genève
Susanne Günthner, Universität Münster
Gunther Kress, University of London
Katrín Lehnen, Universität Giessen
Danièle Moore, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver

Describing, modelling and optimising language competences has long been a key domain of research in applied linguistics. Over the last few years, the notion of language competence has been re-examined and redefined under the influence of research in sociolinguistics, language education, and, more largely, research on language use in various settings. The focus has been on teaching and learning (competence-oriented objectives, task-based teaching and learning), assessment and programme evaluation as well as the professionalisation of the language teaching field. In the field of education, in particular, communicative and linguistic competences are presented today as sets of key competences pupils or students need to acquire. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the introduction of language standards has been on the political agenda, starting at the lower grades of school.

Drawing on this interest in the notion of language competences in education and in the workplace, the conference aims to stimulate reflection and debate on the multiple transitions and transformations at play: transitions from orality to literacy (for example, the increasing role of writing in the workplace), transitions from one register to another (from standard to non-standard, etc.), from monolingual practices to multilingualism, from theory to practice, from face-to-face exchanges to virtual interactions, from the conceptualisation of the notion of competence to how it pans out in actual situations, etc.

In concrete terms, discussion is invited about linguistically manifest transitions and transformations of competences as they occur across contexts, across age and social groups, and across school level and developmental stages: e.g. from primary to secondary school, from high school to university or from apprenticeships to the professional world. It is indeed during these transitions that the competences developed become crucial to building identities or accessing new resources.

In line with this thematic orientation, papers or panels will contribute to one of the three tracks below, in addition to more general contributions about language competence:

- a) *Transforming contexts and social changes*: in this track, papers will be concerned with the ways in which social and political changes influence language competences and the ways in which they are used and validated. How do language competences evolve in contemporary societies? How do political and educational institutions integrate these developments and attempt to influence them?
- b) *Changing individuals and transforming trajectories*: in this track, papers will be concerned with the transitions lived by participants at the various stages of their biographical trajectories. How are biographical changes and transitions affected by language competences? How do learning trajectories, whether in the school context or elsewhere, help build language competences?
- c) *Transforming concepts and methods*: in this track, papers will examine the changes undergone by the notion of competence, both on the theoretical and the methodological level, in the field of applied linguistics. After the founding debates in the 70s and the implementation of communicative approaches to competences, what are perceptible changes in the ways this notion is conceived and discussed? How can we model the dynamic dimension of language competences? Which tools should be developed to do so?

Panels and papers

Proposals are invited for papers and for panels (thematically connected series of presentations).

Individual papers : 30-minute slots for presentations (20 minutes for the paper, 5 minutes for discussion and 5 minutes for the transition). All individual papers are scheduled for Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, so that they do not run in parallel with panels. Abstracts: 300 words maximum.

Panels : 90-minute blocks, including 3 to 9 thematically or methodologically connected papers, organised and led by a convenor. Panel abstracts: 500 words maximum.

Languages

German, French, Italian and English are the official conference languages.

Paper submissions

Information concerning the submission of abstracts as well as practical information concerning conference organisation (fees, travel, etc.) may be obtained from the VALS-ASLA website (www.vals-asla.ch). Please address any further questions to aleksandra.gnach@zhaw.ch

Deadlines

The deadline for the submission of individual abstract or for panel abstracts is August, 31st, 2009.

Publication

A publication of selected contributions in the Bulletin VALS-ASLA is planned.

Organising committee

Jean-François de Pietro (IRDP, Neuchâtel)

Ingrid de Saint-Georges (Université de Genève)

Aleksandra Gnach (ZHAW Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften)

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