

Workshop:

How to research the same question in different types of language users – some methodological considerations

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Linguistic research is often concerned with characterizing what language users know about a specific language. There is no one method, however, that would allow for a privileged access to this knowledge, as each method comes with limitations. While this in itself constitutes a methodological problem, this problem is amplified by the fact that the same method may play out differently in different types of language users.

For instance, in experimental research, adults may not be challenged by stimuli suitable for children, and this may influence the way they use their linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, children's cognitive resources may make it impossible for them to treat materials that were designed for adults. Next to age, other variables, such as educational background or motivation, may also strongly influence how language users respond to experimental situations. Similar difficulties arise for non-experimental methods, such as corpus research or interviews.

Given all this, researchers who want to measure the same construct in different populations are faced with the challenge of developing measures that are appropriate for each population and still yield results that can be compared to each other in a meaningful way.

In this workshop, we will look at this problem from different perspectives and discuss possible strategies for different types of research questions, data and participating language users. We will discuss existing examples of work comparing different populations (e.g. Järvikivi et al., 2015; Schimke & Dimroth, 2018; Verhagen & Schimke, 2009). In addition, workshop participants are encouraged to bring their research questions, research methods, or existing data.

Järvikivi, J., Pyykkönen-Klauck, P., Schimke, S., Colonna, S., & Hemforth, B. (2014). Information structure cues for 4-year olds and adults: Tracking eye movements to visually presented anaphoric referents. *Language, Cognition & Neuroscience*, 29(7), 877-892.

Schimke, S. & Dimroth, Ch. (2018). The influence of finiteness and lightness on verb placement in L2 German: comparing child and adult learners. *Second Language Research*.

Verhagen, J. & Schimke, S. (2009) Differences or fundamental differences? Kommentar zu J. Meisels Artikel ‚Second language acquisition in early childhood‘. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft*, 28(1), 97 - 106.