

Assessing reading for young language learners: Asking the questions in the language of schooling?

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The language of rubrics and responses

- International tests and most assessments in Swiss schools: foreign language is also the language of instructions, rubrics, responses, etc.
- The ‘Lingualevel’ issue:

Bspl.: Wo startet die Radtour „Pedal for Scotland“?

im Roseburn Park

1. Wie alt muss man sein, um am Diskjockey-Kurs teilnehmen zu können?

2. Wie lange hat die Einstein-Ausstellung am Dienstag geöffnet?

3. Wie viel kostet der Eintritt in den Club "Po Na Na"?

What's on?

Sports

Pedal for Scotland

28 Aug 09:00 09:20 09:40 10:00
Prices: £5-£10
Venue: Roseburn Park
Address: Murrayfield, Edinburgh, EH12
Tel: 0141 229 5359

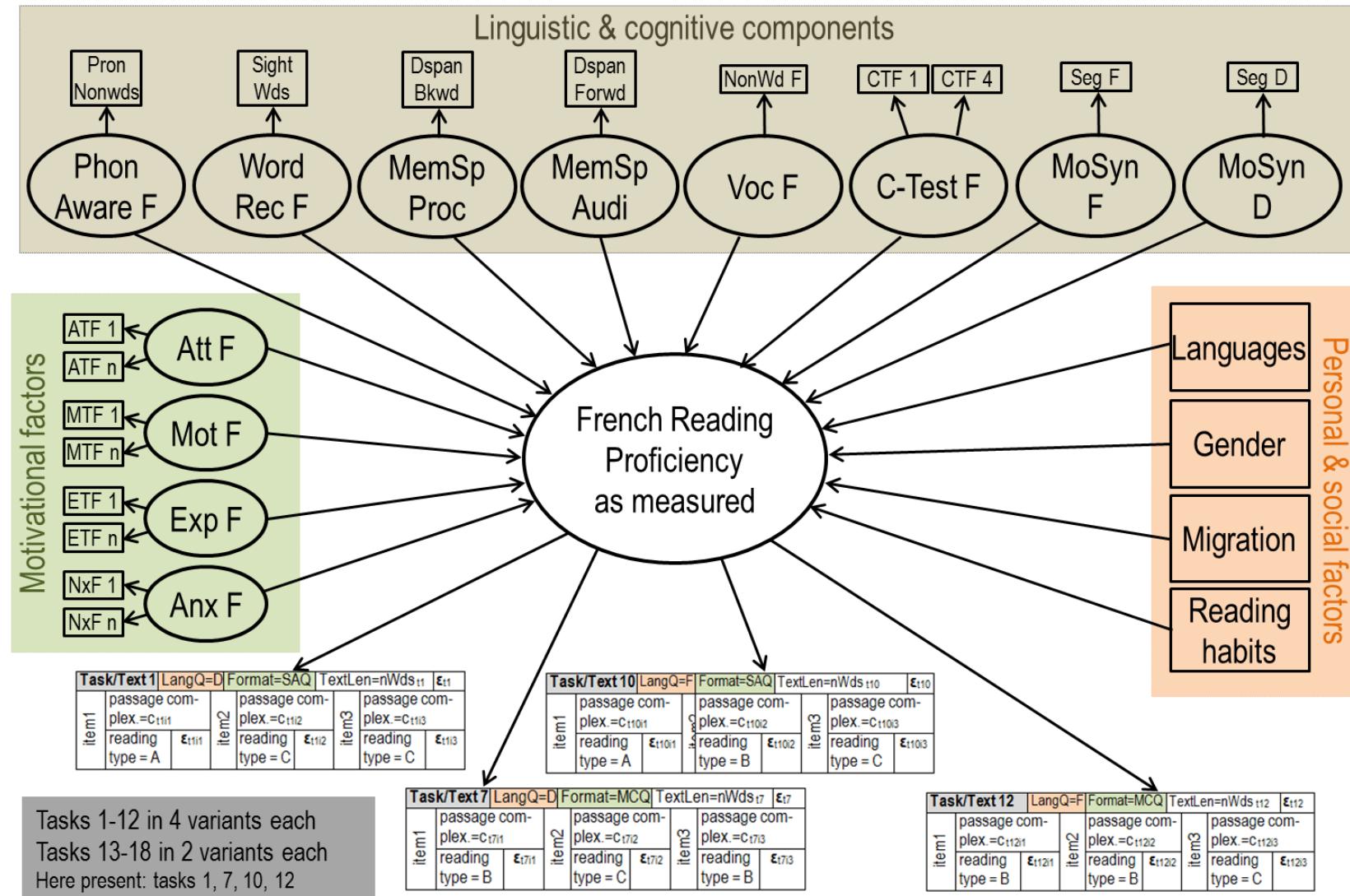
1 Oct, 2 Oct
Prices: £1 (£50)
Venue: Meadowbank Sports Centre
Address: 39 London Road, Edinburgh, EH4
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Tel: 0131 661 5351

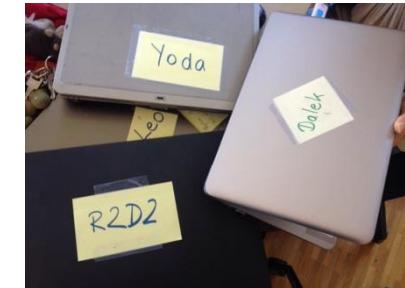
<http://lingualevel.ch/>

TASK LAB

Task Lab

- **Objective:** Understand computer-based reading comprehension assessment better
 - Investigate specific task features (test formats & language of rubrics and responses)
 - Gain insights into the interaction between task and test taker characteristics
 - Inform assessment scale interpretation
- **Target group:** pupils (age 12, German: language of schooling, French: first foreign language, 4 years, 2 or 3 lessons per week)





Instruments

Reading tasks:

- 12 tasks in 4 versions (3 items each):
 - MCQ + German
 - MCQ + French
 - SAQ + German
 - SAQ + French
- 6 tasks in 2 test versions (3 items each):
 - MTCH + German
 - MTCH + French

Component tests:

- Digit span tasks
- Sight word recognition
- Pronunciation of non-words
- C-Tests
- Segmentation tasks
- Yes/no vocabulary test

Questionnaires

Un mail d'Alicia

De : Alicia
A : M. et Mme Chappuis
Date : 25 juillet
Objet : Salut !

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**Links siehst du ein Mail von Alicia an ihre Grosseltern.
Dazu stellen wir dir drei Fragen.**

1ère question :
Quel est le thème du mail d'Alicia ?

Schreibe deine Antwort auf Deutsch!

SAQ French

Weiter

**Links siehst du ein Mail von Alicia an ihre Grosseltern.
Dazu stellen wir dir drei Fragen.**

1. Frage:
Über welches Thema schreibt Alicia in ihrem Mail?

**Schreibe deine Antwort auf Französisch!
Ecris ta réponse en français !**

SAQ German

Weiter

**Links siehst du ein Mail von Alicia an ihre Grosseltern.
Dazu stellen wir dir drei Fragen.**

**1. Frage:
Über welches Thema schreibt Alicia in ihrem Mail?**

Über ihr Leben als Zirkuskind.

Über ihren Tag im Zirkus.

Über ihren Kurs in einer Clownscole.

MCQ German

Weiter

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Dazu stellen wir dir drei Fragen.

1. Frage:
Über welches Thema schreibt Alicia in ihrem Mail?

Über ihr Leben als Zirkuskind.

Über ihren Tag im Zirkus.

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MCQ French

Weiter

The study

- Piloting
 - Stimulated recall for reading tasks (34 students)
 - Piloting of all instruments (97 students)
- Main study
 - 35 classes, \approx 600 students
 - Reading comprehension test (50 min) + short questionnaire
 - Component tests:
 - Oral test (20 min)
 - Written test (40 min)
 - Questionnaire (10 min)



THE LANGUAGE OF RUBRICS AND RESPONSES: EVIDENCE

Qualitative evidence from the interviews

- Switching between languages was not perceived to be a problem.
- Questions and multiple choice options in French were often not or falsely understood.

I: ...Was magst du lieber?

S: Auf Deutsch. Weil beim Französischen ist man aufgeschmissen, wenn man die Frage nicht versteht.

I: ... What do you prefer?

S: In German. Because in French you're busted when you don't understand the question.

Frage: Pourquoi le **chemin de l'école de Vidal est-il spécial ?**

I: Weisst du, wie die Frage lautet?
S: Warum ist das **Chemielabor** von Vidal so speziell.

Question: Why is Vidal's **way to school special?**

*I: Do you know what the question means?
S3: Why is Vidal's **chemistry lab** so special?*

Qualitative evidence from the interviews

- In French, writing was perceived as difficult.

S: Ich habe die Antwort, kann sie aber nicht auf Französisch schreiben.

S: I've got the answer but I can't write it in French.

- Many students copied their answer directly from the text or wrote short fragments.

I: War das Schreiben auf Französisch ein Problem?

S: Nein, das konnte ich ja abschreiben.

I: Was writing in French a problem?

S: No, I could just copy it.

Qualitative evidence from the interviews

- Students sometimes had different answers in mind than they actually wrote.

I: Kannst du mir deine Antwort kurz vorlesen?

S: Also Karusu verliert seinen Papa im Zoo.

I: Und geschrieben hast du „Karusu devenu papa“.

S: Ich habe geschrieben: “Pierre Dumont en danger” (...).

I: Was würdest du auf Deutsch schreiben (...)?

S: Pierre Dumont ist sehr gefährlich.

I: Can you read your answer?

S: Karusu loses his dad in the zoo.

I: And you wrote “Karusu devenu papa” [Karusu became a dad].

S: I wrote “Pierre Dumont en danger” [P. D. in danger] (...).

I: What would you write in German (...)?

S: Pierre Dumont is very dangerous.

Qualitative evidence from SAQ answers

Language of questions and answers	Absurd answers	Answers copied from text
French	33%	37%
German	10%	1%

Q: Où sont les trois personnes?

A: elle intéressant ce livre, imageset parler.

Q: *Where are the three people?*

A: *She interesting this book, [imageset] talk.*

Q: Qu'est-ce qu'Emilie préfère à l'école?

A1: Zurich.

A2: a monde.

A3: Il préféré à l'école jeudi.

Q: *What does Emilie like in school?*

A1: *Zurich.*

A2: *[a] world.*

A3: *He preferred at school Thursday.*

Q: Qu'est-ce que les deux veulent acheter?

A1: papa et garçon.

A2: et en plus tu n'aimes pas faire du vélo.

Q: *What do the two want to buy?*

A1: *dad and boy*

A2: *and you don't like to go by bike*

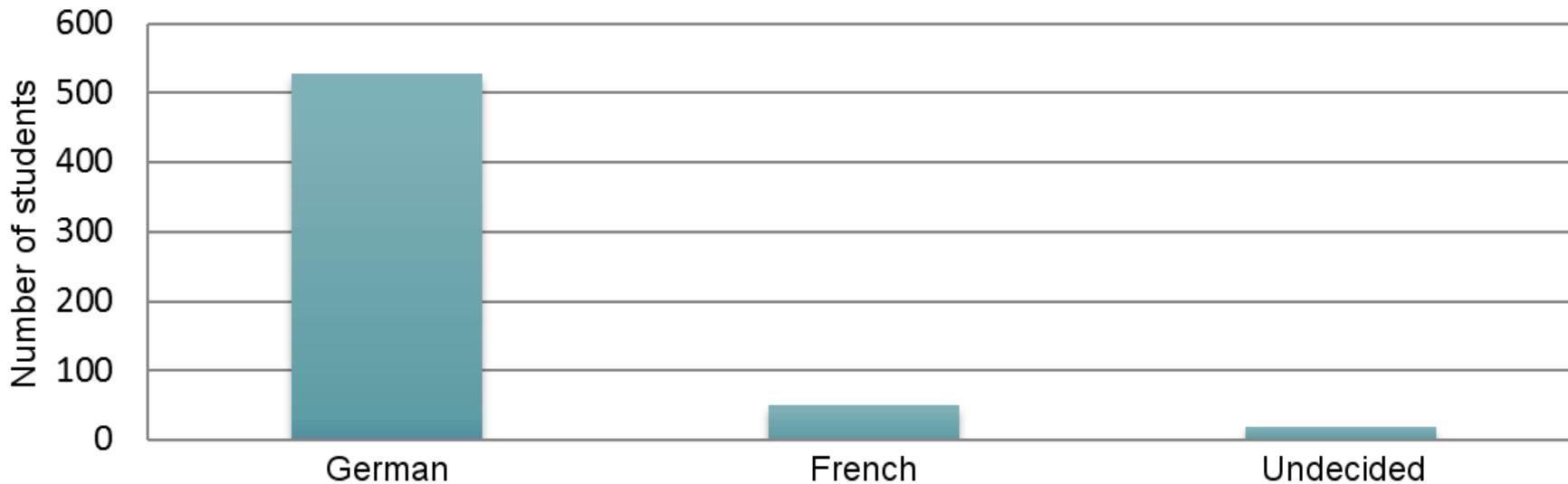
Qualitative evidence from the questionnaire

Was war für dich einfacher?

- Die Fragen und Antworten auf Deutsch.
- Die Fragen und Antworten auf Französisch.

What was easier for you?

- The questions and answers in German.*
- The questions and answers in French.*



Qualitative evidence from the questionnaire

German is easier:

Französisch kann es sein das man ein wichtiges wort nicht versteht und dann auch die ganze Frage nicht.

In French, it can happen that you don't understand an important word and then you don't understand the whole question.

Weil ich die Fragen besser verstanden habe und auch eine besser Antwort geben konnte

Because I understood the questions better and I could give a better answer.

French is easier:

Manch mal wuste ich nicht was das wort bedeutete. In Französisch konnte ich es einfach kopieren

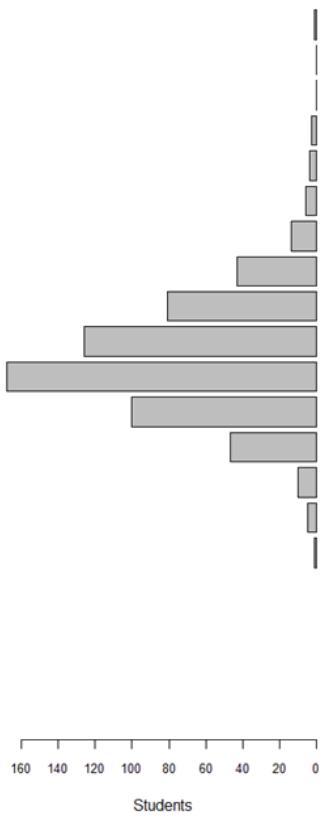
Sometimes I didn't know the meaning of a word. In French I could simply copy it.

Quantitative evidence

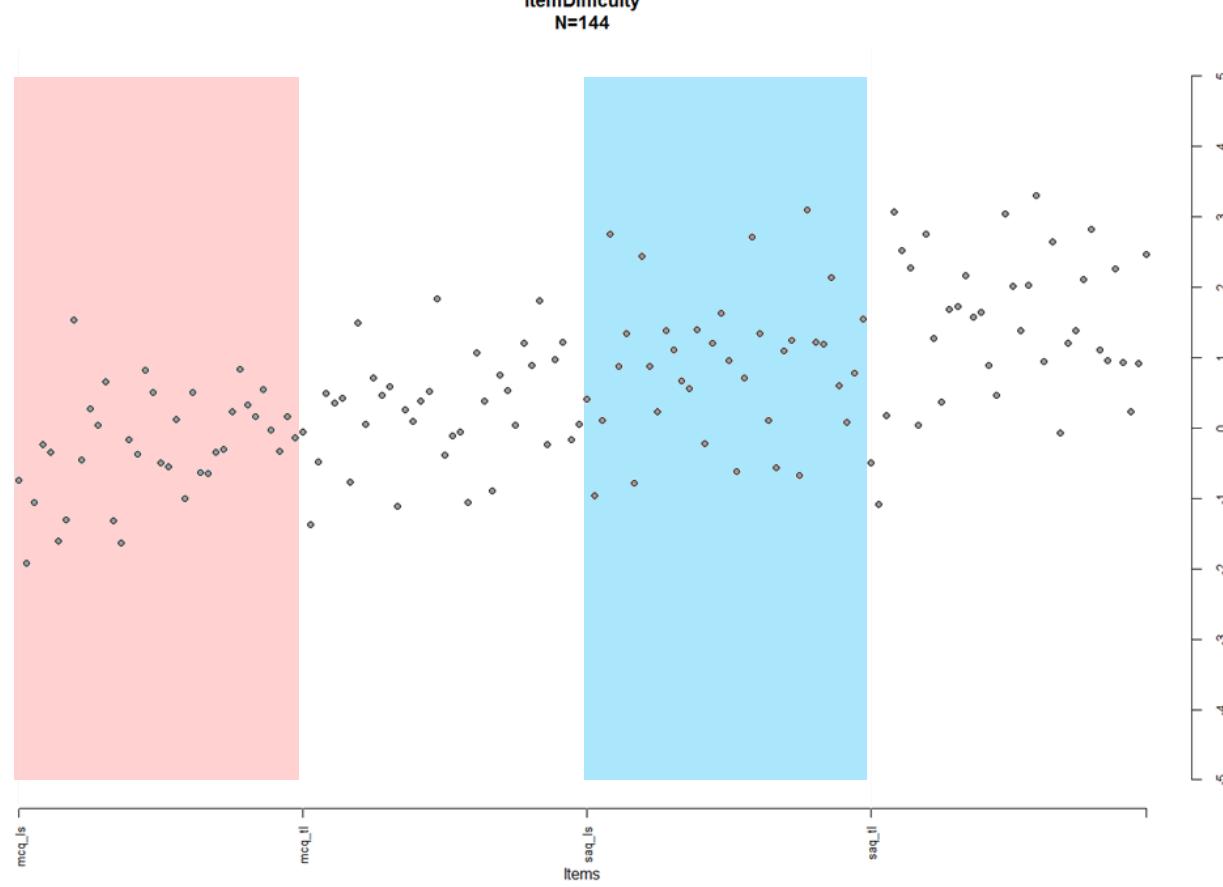
- Scaling: Rasch model
- 609 students
- 180 dichotomous items
- 6 item formats: mcq-ls, mcq-tl, saq-ls, saq-tl, mtch-ls, mtch-tl
- Each student encountered:
 - 10 (13) of 12 (18) tasks (30 (39) items)
 - 6-9 items of each format
- Individual items were solved by 84-156 (84-174) students (\emptyset 120)

Quantitative evidence: divergent difficulty (I)

PersonAbility
N=609

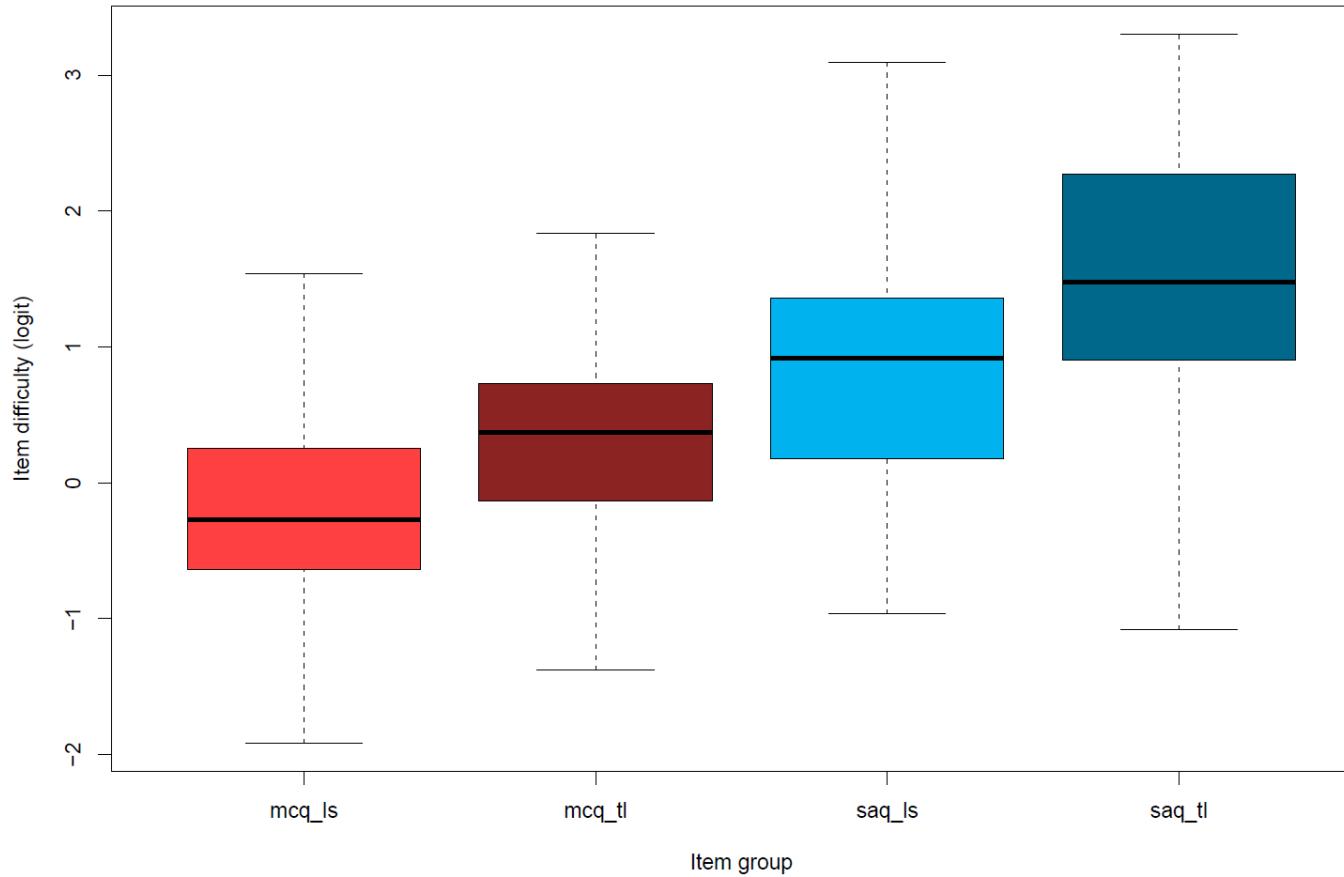


ItemDifficulty
N=144



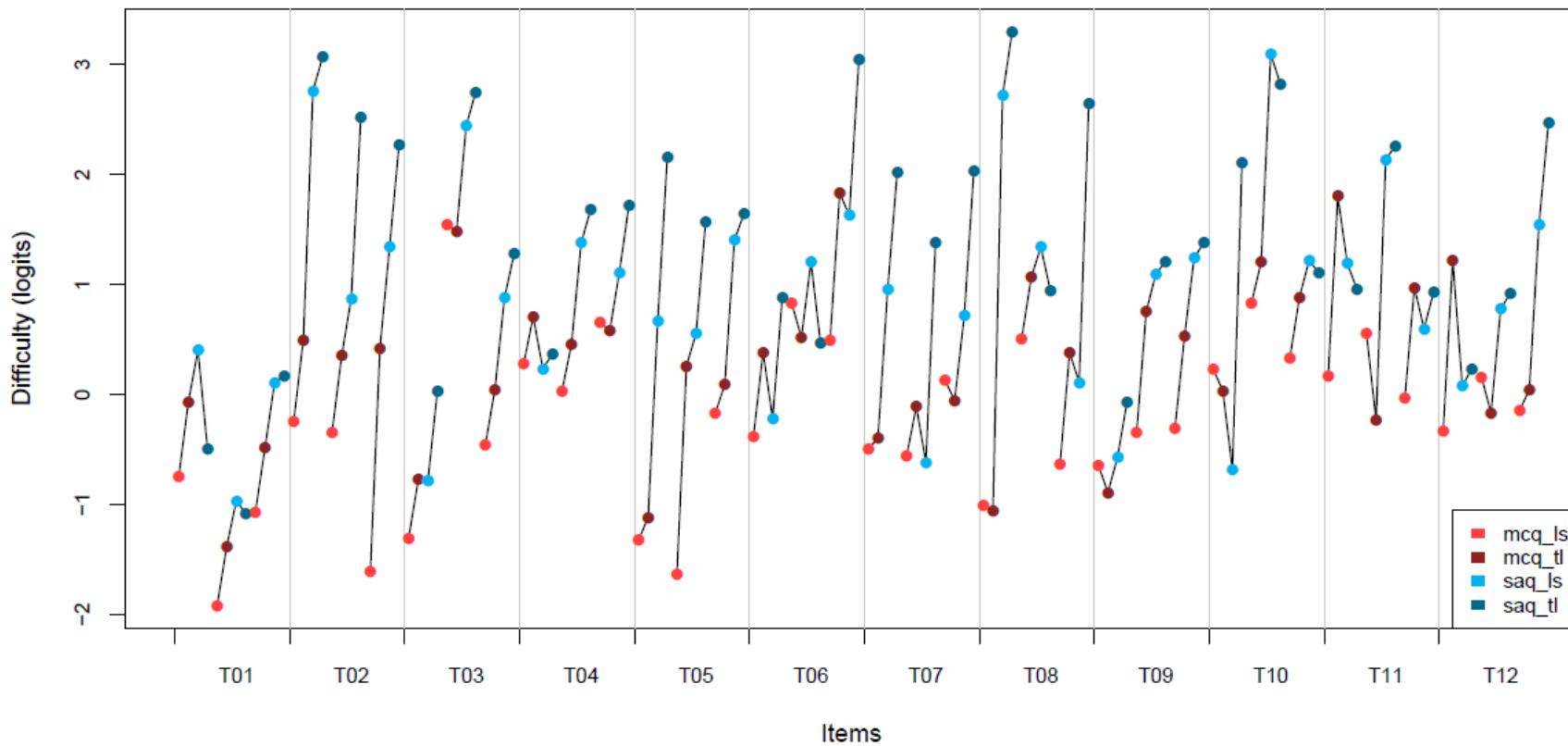
Quantitative evidence: divergent difficulty (I)

Distribution of item difficulties
per format and language



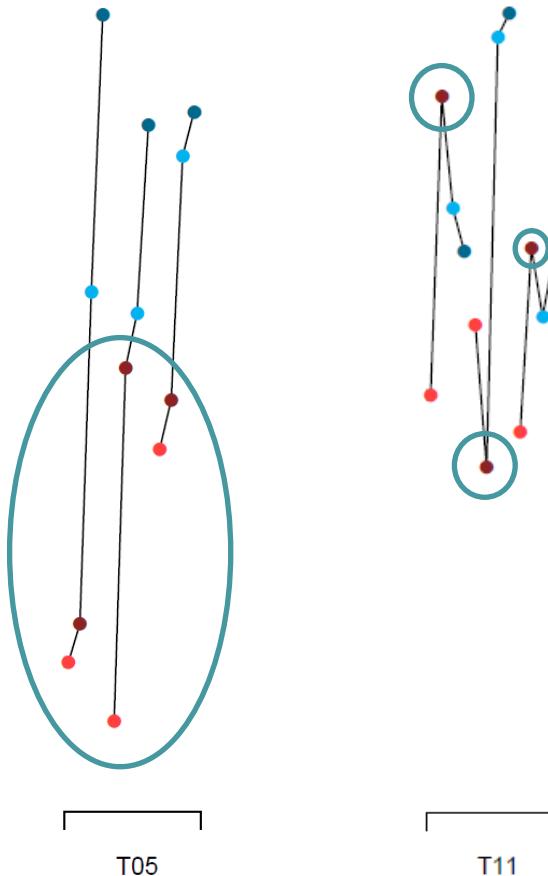
Quantitative evidence: divergent difficulty (II)

Item difficulty 1-PL
by format and language



Quantitative evidence: divergent difficulty (II)

- MCQ-tl: more or less difficult compared to MCQ-ls when answer options contain more or less words from text
- SAQ more difficult than MCQ when answer cannot be copied from text

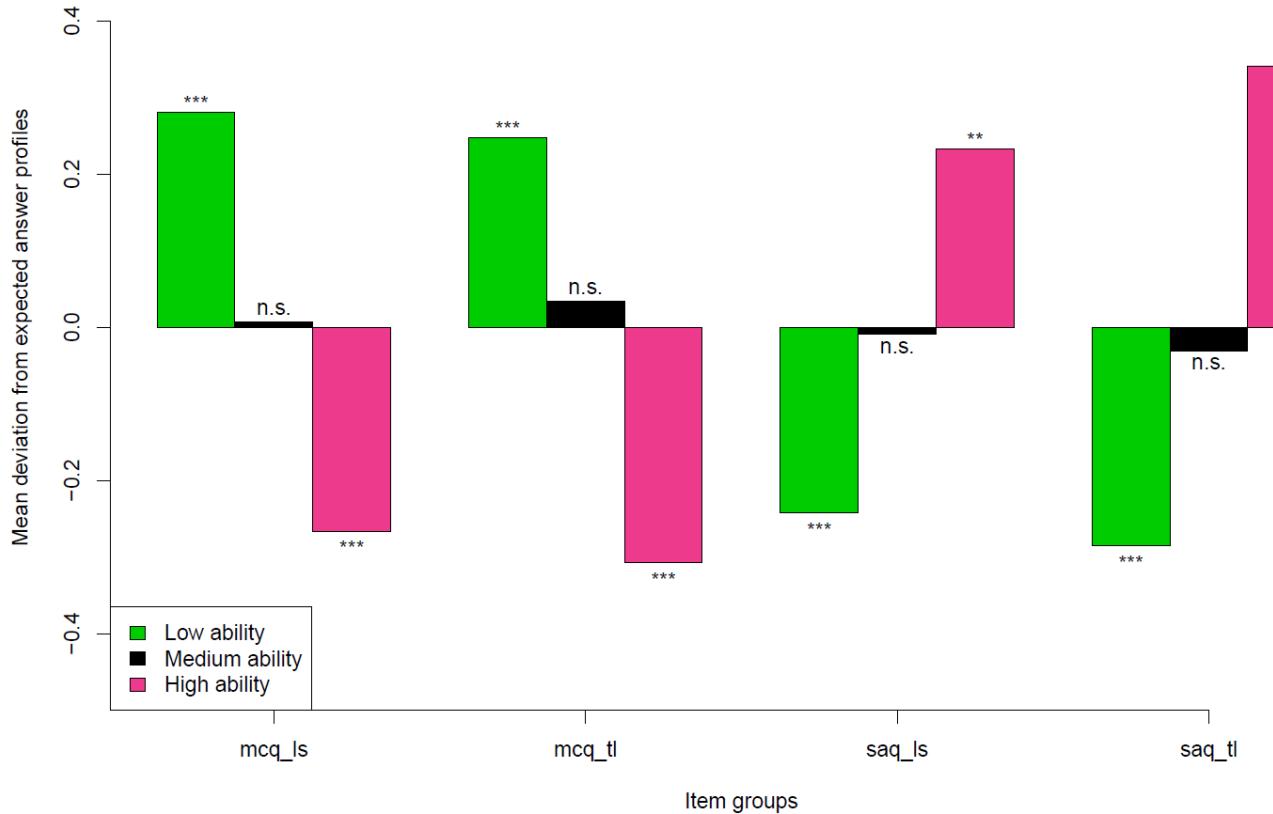


- Easier when key words in question appear in the text
- Words in correct answer help OR words in distractor mislead
- SAQ easier when answer can be copied from text



Quantitative evidence: divergent difficulty (III)

Profile Analysis: mean deviation profiles
(Verhelst 2011)



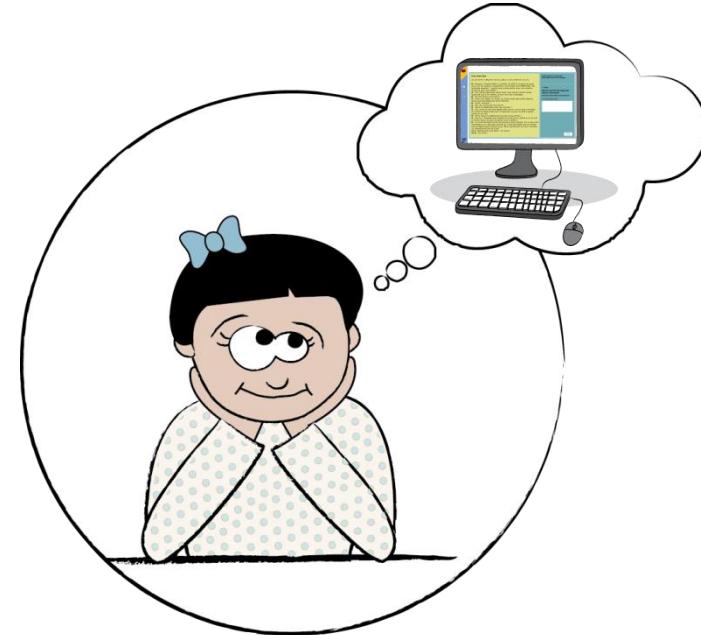
Verhelst, N. D. (2011). Profile Analysis: A closer look at the PISA 2000 reading data. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 1–18.

Conclusion

- Qualitative data shows a **clear preference for the use of the language of schooling** in reading comprehension questions and answers for beginning learners.
- Quantitative data shows **differences between item difficulties** related to item format and language.
- Quantitative data shows **significant format effects** for different ability groups **amongst students**.
- Quantitative data reveals varied difficulty profiles related to **text overlap and keywords** in questions, answer options and texts.

Comments?

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*Barras, M., Karges, K., & Lenz, P. (in press).
Fremdsprachliche Kompetenzen überprüfen:
Welche Sprache für die Fragen und Antworten in
Leseverstehensitems? Babylonia, 2(2016).*