

One mind, many languages, even more misconceptions: Myths, morals and measures

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When: Wednesday, 21 October 2026, 2-3pm

Where: Meeting room 436, 4th floor, Porzellangasse 4

While multilingualism is a natural potential available to every typically developing human being, many of its complex mechanisms remain shrouded in myths and misconceptions. The talk will start by dispelling the most frequent misapprehensions and pernicious prejudices surrounding bi-/multilingualism and bilingual education. It will then move on to the benefits of speaking two or more languages for both verbal and non-verbal abilities, and discuss why some studies have generated conflicting results. Drawing on data from 118 countries, the talk will also demonstrate how multilingualism moderated teachers' and learners' coping with the transition to emergency remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two languages in the mind not only affect cognitive structure and functioning, but also have a non-trivial influence on speakers' decisions. The talk will discuss how bilinguals' language choices affect moral decision-making in a way that cannot be explained by emotion alone. Finally, it will show how to "count" multilingualism, and why measurement choices matter for the conclusions drawn.

Michał B. Paradowski is a professor and teacher trainer at the Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw, and a research and language teaching consultant. His research interests include second and third language acquisition, bi- and multilingualism, psycholinguistics, embodied cognition, complexity science, social network analysis, and educational psychology. He has given over 280 invited lectures, seminars and workshops across more than 45 countries.

