



Why Dyslexia Looks Different Across Languages — but Shares the Same Underlying Causes



Professor Johannes Ziegler

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Abstract:

Dyslexia occurs in every language, but its symptoms and severity vary — for example, reading English is harder than reading Italian. Using data from children with and without dyslexia in English, French, and Italian, we combined behavioral testing with personalized computer models of reading. Our results show that the same basic cognitive difficulties—linking letters to sounds, processing phonemes, and recognizing letter strings—interact with each language’s writing system to produce different reading outcomes. This work explains why dyslexia looks different across languages, while revealing the universal mechanisms that shape how children learn to read.

Date: November 5, 2025 (Wednesday)
Time: 12:45 – 14:00
Venue: Room 703-704, Meng Wah Complex, HKU
Chair: Professor Shelley Tong

Registration:



https://hkuems1.hku.hk/hkuems/ec_regform.aspx?guest=Y&UEID=103574

About the speaker:

Johannes Ziegler is the director of the Center of Excellence on *Language, Communication, and the Brain* (ILCB) at the University of Aix-Marseille, France. He is a member of the French National Council for Education (CSEN). Over the past 20 years, his research has focused on the neural and cognitive foundations of reading, cross-linguistic studies of reading acquisition, dyslexia, and computational models of typical and atypical reading. He has published over 160 peer-reviewed articles, including in *Science*, *Psychological Review*, *Psychological Bulletin*, and *PNAS*. He has also developed and evaluated digital tools (e.g., GraphoGame) to support reading acquisition, particularly for children with learning difficulties. He is a recipient of the CNRS Bronze Medal and a Knight of the French National Order of Merit.



~ All are welcome ~

For enquiries, please contact the Office of Research, Faculty of Education at hkchow@hku.hk