**PhD Program in Psychology**

**Seminar “Multilingualism in Action: Cognition and Educational Outcomes”**

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20/11/2025, 9:00 – 11:00

Aula Prodi, San Giovanni in Monte, Bologna

**Abstract**

This talk explores how multilingual experience shapes the developing mind, from early childhood through adolescence, and across both typical and neurodiverse populations. Drawing on research from the UCL Multilanguage & Cognition Lab and large-scale longitudinal datasets such as the UK Millennium Cohort Study and the UK National Pupil Database, the focus is placed on how early multilingual exposure influences brain function, executive control, and personality development. New evidence is presented showing that multilingual children, particularly those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, often outperform their monolingual peers in key educational outcomes, such as national exams in English, maths, and science. In addition, novel findings are discussed indicating that multilingualism may offer protective effects for children showing symptoms of ADHD, supporting more favourable behavioural trajectories even when controlling for cognitive and socio-demographic factors. These findings challenge persistent myths about multilingual development and demonstrate the transformative potential of multilingual education in fostering resilience, cognitive growth, and academic success.

The seminar will address the following questions:

1. How does multilingual experience shape cognition, brain function, and personality from childhood through adolescence?
2. In what ways do multilingual children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, demonstrate advantages in educational outcomes?
3. Can multilingualism provide protective effects for children with ADHD symptoms, supporting more favourable behavioural trajectories?

Suggested reading:

Filippi, R., & Bright, P. (2023). A cross-sectional developmental approach to bilingualism: Exploring neurocognitive effects across the lifespan. *Ampersand*, *10*, 100097.This paper won the 2023 Ampersand Best Paper Award and provides insights into how bilingualism affects cognitive development at different life stages.

Filippi, R., et al. (2024). The impact of multilingualism and socio-economic status on academic performance: evidence from the SCAMP and the national pupil databases. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *28*(1), 53–72. This study investigates how multilingualism interacts with socio-economic factors to influence academic outcomes.