



## **Computer-based Assessment of Academic Language Skills – the “CALSy”-Tool**

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### **Abstract**

Academic language as defined by Cummins (2000) and Schleppegrell (2004) is a central linguistic register for reaching higher school outcomes in educational systems, particularly in the case of pupils with a migration background – Gogolin (2009), Gogolin and Lange (2010), Leseman, Scheele et al. (2009), Schleppegrell (2004). Furthermore, research on school quality in multi-ethnic constellations has shown that an explicit focus on academic language skills and language learning correlates with other indicators for higher school quality - Gogolin (2009), Helmke and Klieme (2008), Helmke, Goebel et al. (2003), Prenzel and Allolio-Näcke (2006).

Although there is a growing number of language assessment instruments that can be used in multilingual teaching settings (i.e. available in different language versions, for example) and account for some of the phenomena of multilingual speakers (Döll and Dirim 2010), very few allow an assessment of the academic language skills essential to obtain higher school outcomes. The German federal program FörMig – Support for Pupils with a Migration background – developed between 2004 and 2009 three language assessment instruments for the languages German, Turkish and Russian with a focus on academic skills (Gantefort and Roth 2010). However, the increase demand of educational institutions, as well as of research on language development, make it reasonable to integrate computer-based automated analysis of language into assessment systems.

The CALSy-Tool is based on a rule driven, automated tagging and parsing system. It analyses written or transcribed text in given content areas. As result, the tool generates statistical data on several aspects of vocabulary, morphology and syntactical structure, including special aspects of academic language usage. These results can be used for scientific interpretation, but also as a source for assessment of language development.

CALSy is being developed and tested within the LiMA – Linguistic Management in Urban Areas – research cluster at the University of Hamburg. The LiMA cluster focuses on the investigation of migration-induced multilingualism as found in urban centers worldwide and in what way it can be translated into advantages for individuals and society and into benefits for the cultural and economic development of urban centers.

The presentation will provide background information on language assessment in multilingual school settings and include practical examples to illustrate the particularities of the CALSy-Tool.