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### Early and late bilingualism effects on the syntactic constraints of code-switching

Bilingual speakers are unique in their ability to simultaneously maintain two languages, fluently alternating between them, or *code-switching*. This study investigates the effect of early and late bilingualism on the syntactic constraints governing code-switching. Evidence suggests that both languages are activated simultaneously for bilingual speakers, and that the activation of one language affects processing of the other (Dijkstra & Van Heuven, 2002; among others). However, the degree of influence of the second language on the first language appears far less robust (Haigh & Jared, 2007). The effect of switching from L1 into L2 is compared with switching from L2 into L1 for Polish-English early and late bilinguals. While reading, subjects switch between languages mid-sentence, either at a clause boundary or within a clause. Using a self-paced reading task, reading time is measured for the word marking the language switch.

Pilot results showed faster reaction times to language switches at clause boundaries than within clauses. Balanced bilingual speakers showed relatively similar latencies regardless of the direction of the language switch. However, participants who reported having a more dominant language showed differing results based on the direction of the language switch. Slower response times occurred for within clause switches from L1 into L2, but not for within clause switches from L2 into L1, suggesting that processing code-switching varies with language proficiency.

### References

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