Testing the effects of distinct code-switching types on cognitive control

Edith Kaan
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States

Rodrigo Mello Medina
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States

Guadalupe Diaz
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States

Kirthana Sane
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States

Savannah Chandler
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States

Matt Neitz
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States

Claire Kuntz
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States

Jorge Valdés Kroff
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States

Souad Kheder
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States

Abstract

Code-switching, that is, the alternation between different languages in a single utterance, provides a unique window into language control mechanisms. Prior studies suggest that bilinguals upregulate their cognitive control when reading sentences that start in one language and end in another (e.g., Adler et al. 2020; Bosma & Pablos, 2020). The current project investigates whether more common types of code-switches and different modalities engage cognitive control differently. We had early Spanish-English bilinguals listen to (Experiments 1, 2, 4), or read (Experiment 3) sentences that were in Spanish only, or included dense or insertional switches to English. After each sentence participants responded to a Flanker trial. In contrast to prior findings, we either found no effect (Exp. 1), or a larger Flanker conflict effect after a switch vs. a unilingual sentence (Exp. 2 - 4). We therefore have no evidence that processing common types of code-switches upregulates cognitive control.

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