



Bilingual disadvantages (reading) and advantages (cognitive control)

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In the present talk, I will discuss two research lines, one on the bilingual disadvantages that arise during reading, and one on cognitive advantages arising from bilingualism, mostly focused on functions outside the linguistic domain (cognitive control). In the reading research line, I will present GECO (Ghent Eye-tracking COrpus), the freely available monolingual (English) and bilingual (Dutch-English) eye-tracking corpus of participants reading a complete novel (56000 words). In this talk, I will present descriptive statistics of reading time measures for first-language (L1) and second-language (L2) reading. I will also present analyses of frequency, neighborhood size, cognate effects and age of acquisition effects for L1 and L2 sentence reading by bilinguals. I will also compare bilingual L1 reading with monolingual L1 reading. Our results are consistent with an integrated mental lexicon with exposure as the main determiner for lexical entrenchment. Findings will be framed within theories of monolingual and bilingual reading, and relative to the weaker links account of bilingualism. For the second research line, I will discuss several experiments that compare cognitive control measurements across various populations of bilinguals and monolingual controls. This will include bilingual patients with Alzheimer's dementia, children attending immersion schooling, interpreters and balanced bilinguals. Results indicate that bilinguals may outperform monolinguals with regard to executive control, and that bilingualism may boost intelligence development and counteract neuronal degeneration.