



## ***Syntactic blocking: When syntactic representations are not shared across languages***

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Cross-linguistic structural priming suggests that proficient bilinguals share syntactic representations across their languages (e.g., Hartsuiker, Pickering, & Veltkamp, 2004). Such priming can occur even when the syntactic structures are not fully identical in the two languages. The shared representations must therefore abstract across such differences. What then determines whether representations are or are not shared across languages? In this talk, I will propose the *syntactic blocking hypothesis*, according to which a structure S in one language and a counterpart S' in another language can only have a shared representation if neither language distinguishes between S and S'. Thus, priming can occur between a passive with SVO structure in one language and one with SOV structure in another language, but not if either language allows both word orders. In that case, the need to distinguish between different word orders blocks the formation of an abstract representation for the passive that is independent of word order. I will discuss structural priming studies using picture description, translation, and artificial language learning tasks that are consistent with the syntactic preemption hypothesis. I will conclude with suggestions to further test this hypothesis.