

An Investigation of Switching Cost through Lexical Decision Task



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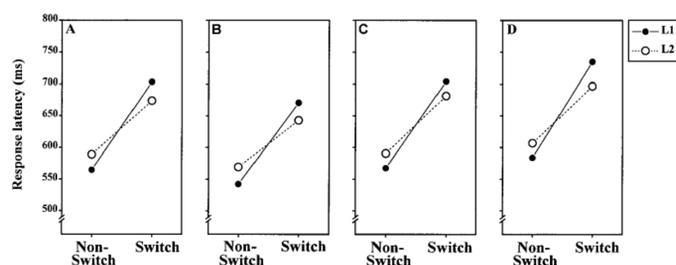
Abstract

While a “paradoxical” asymmetry in the cost of switching language has been observed from bilinguals consistently by previous studies using language production tasks in a mixed-language context, the current study set out to investigate whether the asymmetrical switching cost also applies to a word recognition task and whether reaction times (RTs) differ under monolingual and mixed conditions.

Thirty Chinese-English bilinguals completed lexical decision tasks in a Chinese monolingual condition, an English monolingual condition, and a mixed language condition -- critical stimuli in the mixed list consisted of both nonswitching and switching trials in both languages. RT analyses did not reveal a switching cost in the word recognition task. In addition, participants did not respond significantly faster in a monolingual condition than in a mixed language condition. We argue it is the orthographic distance that leads to the null switching effect.

Introduction

- Asymmetry in the cost of switching language^{1 2 3 4 5 6}: the language switching cost was larger when switching to the first language (L1) from the second language (L2) than vice versa



Meuter & Allport (1999)

- Objectives of the Current Study
 - Is there an asymmetrical switching cost in a word recognition task?
 - Do RTs differ under monolingual and mixed-language context?

Methods and Materials

- Participants: 30 highly proficient Chinese learners of English
- Lexical Decision Task
- Materials (number of items)

Context	Condition	L1 critical stimuli	L2 critical stimuli	L1 Non-Words	L2 Non-words	L1 Fillers	L2 Fillers
Mixed	Nonswitching	12	12	65	65	41	41
	Switching	12	12				
Monolingual	N/A	16	16	16	16	N/A	N/A

- Design: N-2 lexical status; N-2 language; Response Type
 - N1 – first language nonwords n2 – second language nonwords
 - F1 – filler words f2 – second language filler words
 - L1 – first language critical words l2 – second language critical words
- Nonswitching items Switching items
 - A: (n2)(n1)n1 f1 L1 (f1) B: (n2)(n1)n1 f1 L2 (f1)
 - C: (n1)(n2)n2 f1 L1 (f2) D: (n1)(n2)n2 f1 L2 (f1)
 - E: (n2)(n1)n1 f2 L2 (f1) F: (n2)(n1)n1 f2 L1 (f2)
 - G: (n1)(n2)n2 f2 L2 (f2) H: (n1)(n2)n2 f2 L1 (f2)

Results

- Language (Chinese vs. English) X Switching (Switching vs. Nonswitching):
 - No interaction effect $F_{language*switching} = .032, p = .859, \eta^2 = .001$
 - Main effect of language $F_{1,29} = 45.95, p < .001, \eta^2 = .613$
 - No main effect of switching $F_{1,29} = .026, p = .874, \eta^2 = .001$

	Nonswitching	Switching	Difference
L1	490 (48)	492 (62)	2
L2	521 (60)	521 (53)	0
Difference	31***	29***	

- Language (Chinese vs. English) X List (Monolingual vs. Mixed-language)
 - No interaction effect $F_{language*list} = .066, p = .80, \eta^2 = .002$
 - Main effect of language $F_{1,28} = 45.4, p < .001, \eta^2 = .619$
 - No main effect of List $F_{1,28} = 2.825, p = .104, \eta^2 = .092$

	Monolingual	Mixed	Difference
L1	475 (49)	491 (49)	16
L2	503 (48)	522 (61)	19
Difference	28***	31***	

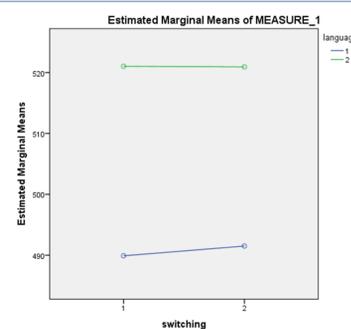


Figure 1. Language X Switching

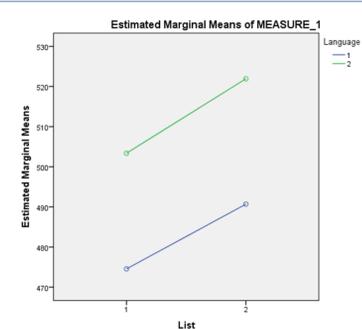


Figure 2. Language X List

Discussion

- No switching cost was not observed in word recognition task among highly proficient Chinese-English bilinguals.
- Mixed-language context did not lead to slower response latencies.
- However, switching cost was observed by previous studies using word recognition tasks.^{7 8 9}
- What leads to the discrepancies is orthographic distance – whether L1 and L2 share the same script.
- Previous research shows that script differences facilitate rapid access by providing a cue to the lexical processor that directs access to the proper lexicon.^{7 10}

Conclusions

- The organization of the bilingual lexicon is influenced by whether the two involved languages share the same script. Script difference could facilitate access to the specific lexicon and thus reduce competition between the two languages.

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