
Testing multilingual speakers in both mono- and multilingual mode: Some insights from psycholinguistic research

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Most studies on multilingual language processing are based on monolingual testing. However, multilinguals' language processing and understanding may be best conceptualized as the result of a dynamic interaction between all languages of their repertoire (e.g. [1] and [2]). In two studies, we tested multilingual speakers in two conditions, when the task involved one language only or when it involved more than one. We investigated the effects of the two conditions on multilinguals' language processing and understanding.

In Study 1 [3], 33 Greek-Italian bilinguals (8-11 years) rated the acceptability of grammatical and ungrammatical Italian sentences and were asked to explain what was wrong with the unacceptable ones. Sentences were presented in 3 conditions: (1) single grammatical/ungrammatical Italian sentences; (2) pairs of ungrammatical Italian sentences with their grammatical Italian counterpart; (3) grammatical/ungrammatical Italian sentences with ungrammatical/grammatical Greek translation. Children were better at noticing and explaining errors in condition 3, where their other language (Greek) was activated. We also assessed children's grammatical processing abilities in Italian through a sentence repetition task. Children with lower scores were found to benefit most from condition 3.

In Study 2, children played with Cheeky, a monkey who travelled and encountered problems at 8 locations. At each location, children found **Text A** with information about 3 super-fruits offering super powers. Children also got **Text B**, a story describing Cheeky's problem. They had to draw inter-textual inferences to decide which fruit Cheeky ate to solve the problem (e.g. a fruit that can make you jump high when you are in a hole). Text A and B were either presented in the same language (either Italian or German) or in different languages (Italian-German /German-Italian). In the two bilingual conditions, children were more likely to integrate information from Text A and Text B when they explained the inference.

Multilingual tests emerged as a more ecological way to assess multilinguals' language processing abilities, since they do not restrict multilinguals to one language. The comparison between the results of the two testing modes has allowed us to gain psycholinguistic insights into multilingual processing.

References: • [1] Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the cross-fire*. Multilingual Matters. • [2] García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century*. Wiley. • [3] Torregrossa, J, Eisenbeiß, S., Bongartz, C. (2022). Boosting Bilingual Metalinguistic Awareness Under Dual Language Activation. *Language Learning*.