Flexibility in bilingual lexical access: Evidence from the production and comprehension of language switching

Previous research on bilingual language switching and lexical access has demonstrated a consistent reaction time cost associated with producing a switched token. This switch cost has generally been shown to be asymmetrical, with bilinguals evidencing a greater delay when producing switches into their dominant language relative to the non-dominant language (e.g. Meuter & Allport, 1999), although such costs may be flexible, depending on individual and contextual factors. Building on this line of research, in this talk I will report on two recent studies that approach the notion of flexibility from different perspectives. First, extending the largely production-oriented approaches into the domain of comprehension, I will discuss findings from an eye-tracking paradigm that examines variability in the time course of comprehension of auditory code-switches. Second, while previous work has shown that both individual (for proficiency see Costa & Santesteban, 2004) and contextual (for stimuli design see Gollan & Ferreira, 2009; Olson, 2015) factors drive flexibility, I will discuss an ongoing project that makes use of a cued picture-naming task to address how external or environmental factors may drive flexibility in language selection. As a whole, these studies point to a sensitive and flexible language selection mechanism employed in bilingual lexical access.