Cognitive Cost of Switching Between Standard and Dialect Varieties.

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### Introduction:

- Switching between languages in picture naming incurs a cost associated with inhibition of the non-target language (Meuter & Allport, 1999).
- This cost is symmetrical in balanced bilinguals and asymmetrical in unbalanced bilinguals with higher cost associated with switching back into L1 (Costa & Santesteban, 2004).
- We investigated whether cost is incurred in similar ways by bidialectals switching between two dialects.
- To increase generalisability, we conducted this experiment in 2 locations: in Scotland using Standard Scottish English and Dundonian-Scots bidialectals and in Germany using German and Ocher bidialectals.
- We also investigated differences between active vs. passive, and older vs. younger bidialectals.

### Method:

- **Participants:** 72 bidialectals
  - Scottish experiment: 16 ‘active’, 16 ‘passive’ bidialectals.
  - German experiment: 16 younger, 16 older bidialectals.

- **Materials:**
  - 2 cognate blocks (e.g. ‘house’ vs. ‘hoose’; ‘Banane’ vs. ‘Ban’)
  - 2 non-cognate blocks (e.g. ‘children’ vs. ‘bairns’; ‘Hose’ vs. ‘Boks’).

- Each block contained 72 items with a similar number of switch vs. non-switch trials distributed equally across items and dialect varieties.

- **Task:** Name picture in one or other variety depending on colour cue.

### Results:

**Scottish** experiment: significant effects of

- **Cognate Status:** Cognates < Non-Cognates, \(p < .001\)
- **Switch Status:** Non-Switch < Switch, \(p < .001\)
- **Cognate Status X Dialect Variety,** \(p < .001\)
- **Cognate Status X Switch Status,** \(p = .001\)

**German** experiment: significant effects of

- **Cognate Status:** Cognates < Non-Cognates, \(p < .01\)
- **Switch Status:** Non-Switch < Switch, \(p < .001\)
- **Dialect Variety,** \(p < .05\)
- **Dialect Variety X Age Group,** \(p < .05\)
- **Dialect Variety X Switch Status,** \(p < .001\)

### Discussion:

- In both experiments, switch trials took longer than non-switch trials, replicating previous findings for bilinguals (Meuter & Allport, 1999). This suggests that there are distinct representations of dialect varieties, similar to languages.
- Both experiments also showed that cognates were named faster than non-cognates confirming that similarity reduces switch cost (Costa et al., 2000).
- A symmetrical switch cost, evidenced by lack of ‘dialect variety x trial type’ interactions in either experiment, was found for active and passive Scottish, as well as younger and older German bidialectals (Costa & Santesteban, 2004). Perhaps with equal exposure, asymmetry in production may not affect strength of representation.
- Further research needs to determine to what extent the switch cost is associated with inhibition of competing lexical entries or of competing articulatory settings.

### References:


### Acknowledgements:

Part of this research was funded by The Leverhulme Trust (RPG-375).