

PLM 2022 Thematic Session

8–10 September 2022, Poznań, Poland

How language and emotion interact in a bilingual mind

Conveners: Guillaume Thierry, Rafał Jończyk

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Invited speaker: prof. Michał Białek

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Title of the invited talk:

“How to debias thinking: insight from the foreign language effect”

Abstract of the thematic session:

Given the ubiquitous nature of emotional content in the world’s rampant social mediatization, the relatively recent ability of citizens of the world to communicate quasi instantly with one another, regardless of distance or time of day, and the universalization of bi- and multilingualism (Dewaele, 2010; Grosjean, 2010; Pavlenko, 2014), understanding language-emotion interaction in bilinguals engaged in acts of communication could hardly be timelier and more important. Accumulating evidence demonstrates that bilinguals differ in how they perceive and communicate emotions in their languages. Bilinguals have been shown to experience decreased sensitivity to negative words in L2 as compared to L1 during comprehension (e.g., Wu and Thierry 2012; Jończyk et al. 2016, 2019; Iacozza et al. 2017; García-Palacios et al. 2018; Toivo & Scheepers 2019; Caldwell-Harris, 2014; Pavlenko 2012). And speakers of different languages have been shown to make decisions and take risk differently, depending on the language in which they operate (e.g., Keysar et al. 2012; Gao et al., 2015; Miozzo et al. 2020; Muda et al. 2018).

After being evidenced in survey- and questionnaire-based studies, the attenuation of emotional responses in a L2 context has been termed *emotional disembodiment hypothesis* (e.g., Dewaele, 2010; Pavlenko, 2005; Puntoni, de Langhe, & van Osselaer, 2009; Sutton, Altarriba, Gianico, & Basnight-Brown, 2007). The hypothesis has then received support from investigations relying on physiological (SCR) and electrophysiological (ERP) data that reflect more implicit representations and do not rely on metacognitive evaluation. Such studies converge in showing emotional attenuation in bilinguals processing words in their L2 (Caldwell-Harris, 2014; Pavlenko, 2012), effects that have been traced back to unconscious gating of access to translation equivalents (e.g., Wu & Thierry, 2012, see also Thierry & Wu, 2007) and semantic integration modulation (e.g., Jończyk, 2016a; Sheikh & Titone, 2016). Depleted SCR signals in L2 relative to L1 have also been observed in individuals listening to childhood reprimand and taboo words (Eilola & Havelka, 2011; Eilola, Havelka, & Sharma, 2007; Harris et al., 2003) and consistent modulations have been found when bilinguals listen to or read texts in L2 with an emotional as opposed to a neutral content (Jankowiak & Korpala, 2018).

In this session, we would like to present new evidence on language-emotion-attention-memory interactions and further explore the provoking idea that the language a person speaks may affect the emotions they experience. This idea has consequences for language policy, decision-making, or education, among others. We greatly welcome presentations of studies investigating language-emotion interactions in bilinguals as well as papers discussing how to embrace the new challenges arising from the study of emotion processing in bilingual populations.

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