

Eye-tracking as a tool in bilingualism research – an introduction

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For decades now psycholinguists have been trying to uncover the mysteries of the bilingual mind with the use of various research methods. The analysis of eye movements (eye-tracking) is becoming an increasingly popular method of studying language processing. One of the major advantages of eye-tracking is its ecological validity. Unlike other traditionally used behavioural methods, eye-tracking allows for moment-by-moment investigation of decisions made by language users as they perform tasks in fairly natural environments. This workshop is aimed at everyone who is new to eye-tracking and who would like to learn how it can be used in research on language processing in bilinguals. In the first part of the workshop I will introduce the participants to the basics of the human visual system. I will also show what type of data can be obtained from an eye-tracker and how the data can be analysed. Next, we will discuss two major eye-tracking paradigms to show which questions in bilingualism research can be addressed with the help of eye-tracking. Topics to be discussed include speech perception, reading, cross-language interference, etc. Given that the majority of eye-trackers record not only the position of the eye but also the size of the pupil, we will also touch upon a few pupillometry studies. We will see how changes in pupil size can provide an estimate of the cognitive load involved in various tasks. In the final part of the workshop participants will gain some practical knowledge on how to design and run eye-tracking experiments followed by a hands-on mini eye-tracking session.
