

**Roberto R. Heredia and Anna B. Cieřlicka (eds.): Bilingual  
Figurative Language Processing**

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Bilingual Figurative Language Processing is a collection of research projects which investigate how bilingual speakers cope with the semantic ambiguity inherent in nonliteral expressions. Adding the bilingual perspective to language processing investigations provides researchers the opportunity to examine to what extent and in what ways the languages of a bilingual interact in the process of making sense of figurative language.

The editors of the volume are both prominent scholars of the field. Roberto R. Heredia, PhD is professor of psychology in the Department of Psychology and Communication at Texas A&M International University. His research interests encompass bilingual lexical representation, bilingual memory and bilingual nonliteral language processing.

Anna B. Cieřlicka, PhD, is associate professor of psychology in the Department of Psychology and Communication at Texas A&M International University. She has published on hemispheric difference in the course of bilingual figurative language processing and investigated the factors affecting bilingual lexical access, such as language dominance, context, and salience.

Aimed at undergraduate and graduate bilingual students, teachers, and researchers, the present volume intends to give an overview of the most significant strands of research carried out in the field of bilingual language processing. An additional objective of the editors is to inspire further research, therefore the book foregrounds methodological considerations to be addressed in the planning of psycholinguistic experiments, and provides ideas for potential research projects.

Figurative language is omnipresent in everyday communication. The motive behind using non-literal expressions was described by Sinclair (1991), pointing out the speaker's attempt to communicate efficiently while reducing the cognitive load on the receiver's side. Consequently, the element of creativity required from the speaker in using formulaic language parallels with the creative abilities activated on the listener's side to make sense of figurative expressions.

What is fascinating about non-literal utterances is that they are inherently ambiguous, yet native language users seem to have no difficulty in understanding them. The extensive body of research carried out in the field of idiom processing in L1 provides a well-established theoretical basis for investigations in non-native figurative language use.

The present volume is the first of its kind in linking figurative language processing and bilingualism. Inquiry into the process through which bilinguals comprehend, acquire, store and produce idiomatic expressions reveal a wide range of linguistic strategies providing evidence for the interaction between the languages of bilinguals. In order to describe the relationship and the processes of

interaction between the mental lexicons of bilinguals, various models have been proposed. The present volume provides an overview of research in the field of bilingual figurative language processing, showcasing the most significant theoretical, methodological, analytical and experimental approaches.

It is the editors' genuine desire that the volume promote bilingual figurative language to become a well-established subfield of bilingual sentence processing. Bringing together a team of international researchers, this book demonstrates the multifaceted nature of research done in this field. The twelve chapters embrace neurolinguistic, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic perspectives, covering a wide range of topics from phrasal verbs, irony, jokes, and idioms to manifestations of cultural content in conceptual metaphors.

Each chapter is supplemented by student material in order to promote further discussion and facilitate additional research. Lists of key words, thought questions, suggested student research ideas, and recommended readings all aim to inspire further research. Similarly practical considerations are the driving force behind presenting certain projects in a way so that they offer hands-on guidelines to help design and carry out psycholinguistic experiments.

The twelve chapters are presented in four sections. The first section (Chapters 1-3) focuses on studies which lay the theoretical groundwork for bilingual figurative language research. Chapter one, authored by Katz and Bowes, explores the notion of embodied cognition through an analysis of the evolution of human language and examining how this knowledge is used in designing online comprehension tasks, and how it provides a new perspective to our understanding of figurative language. In chapter two Istvan Kecskes investigates whether the idiom principle, described by Sinclair (1991), is impaired in bilingual L2 production and whether the open choice principle prevails instead. He comes to the conclusion that the idiom principle applies for any language of a bi- and multilingual, although certain factors affecting L2, such as proficiency or the willingness to use certain structures, result in limited formulaic language use compared to L1. Chapter three describes the findings of three studies carried out by Vaid et al., involving Spanish-English bilinguals. The link between the studies is provided by the authors' interest in multiple meaning activation. By uncovering the obligatory nature of nonliteral activation in one study, revealing an enhanced sensitivity of bilinguals in humour detection in the second, and pointing out the creative advantage gained by previous language brokering experience in solving remote associate problems in the third, the authors shed some light on how bilinguals identify and exploit ambiguity within and across their languages.

The second section (Chapters 4-5) provides readers with an insight into the methodological considerations that need to be addressed in the development of psycholinguistic experiments in bilingual figurative language. Both chapters adopt a critical approach. In Chapter 4, Heredia and Muñoz examine the validity of two theoretical models proposed in the monolingual literature to describe

metaphor processing. They conclude that neither the Direct Access Model, nor the Indirect Processing Model provides appropriate account for all features of metaphor processing. They advocate the relevance of a third model, the Graded Saliency Hypothesis, offered by Giora (2003), because this model suggesting initial processing of coded salient meanings in the mental lexicon captures literal and nonliteral meaning saliency across metaphor familiarity and aptness at metaphor offset, a perspective missing from the previously employed models. Chapter 5, authored by García et al., provides a critical overview of techniques commonly used in the study of bilingual figurative language processing. After assessing classic behavioural reading paradigms, they discuss the cross-modal lexical priming task proposed by Swinney (1979). Finally they review event-related potentials (ERPs) and their application in bilingual figurative language research.

Section three consists of a series of studies that investigate the mechanisms at the core of figurative language processing. Titone et al., (Chapter 6) provide a survey of research into bilingual idiom processing and present the Constraint-Based Model of Idiom Processing. This model asserts that bilinguals, similarly to monolinguals, simultaneously use all available information during comprehension and that this process involves both direct retrieval and compositional analysis. They also discuss the results of a study they carried out to investigate the comprehension of idioms in English-French bilinguals, based on the Constraint-Based Model. Cieślicka, in Chapter 7, focuses on the acquisition and processing of idioms by L2 learners. She proposes the parasitic mechanism as the cognitive strategy which describes best how L2 learners build figurative competence. Chapter 8 deals with phrasal verb processing. Paulman et al. present a study in which they use ERPs to shed some light on the timing of phrasal verb comprehension and conclude that proficient L2 speakers use similar strategies to those of native speakers. In chapter 9, Bromberek-Dyzman discusses irony processing in L1 and L2. She posits attitude as a language independent meaning ingredient and, breaking with the literal/nonliteral approach of figurative language, concludes that irony processing is rather the result of affect-driven mechanisms.

The last section brings together a range of studies that reflect a cross-linguistic approach and discuss pedagogical issues pertaining to the acquisition of figurative competency. Lontas, in Chapter 10, suggests that more attention needs to be directed on the effect idiomatic tasks have on participants' overall performance. He also argues that research into the comprehension/production of second language idioms should be based on both quantitative and qualitative data. Kövecses et al., (Chapter 11) reveal a remarkably congruent cultural model underlying in the anger metaphors of five different languages. They base their analysis on a new model to measure metaphorical saliency which allows to determine the cultural importance of conceptual metaphors. The last chapter

addresses important pedagogical issues. In a study focusing on the semantic transparency of idioms, Boers and Webb reveal a surprising divergence in the ratings of native speaker teachers as to the relative semantic transparency of multiword units on one hand, and a similarly marked disparity in the transparency ratings of the teachers and those of advance learners on the other hand.

*Bilingual Figurative Language Processing* provides readers and graduate students with an overview of the cornerstones in figurative language research, both theoretical and empirical. Young researchers can acquire hands-on experience in the design and development of psycholinguistic experiments, reflecting the editors' deliberate intention to inspire further research in the field of bilingual figurative language processing. Instead of providing definitive answers, the volume rather aims at generating a critical discussion among researchers, as well as serving as a basis for further research.

### References

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