

Abstract for the general public

Bilinguals have two words to name each object/concept, one in each language. How do they choose which language to speak in? How do they decide to **switch between languages with seeming ease** during their everyday conversations?

Language switching has so far been investigated through a simple picture naming task. It has been found that switching from one language to another incurs a cost. However, in daily life, we usually do not name objects around us in isolation. It is often a response to a previously asked question, for example, 'strawberry ice cream' to a question like 'What would you like to eat?'. The reason is that the primary goal of speaking is to communicate with each other. We will aim to fill the existing gap in the literature to understand **how we switch between languages within such a complex task as a conversation**. We want to investigate and understand what processes occur in our brain when we switch between languages during conversations.

Bilingual conversations can employ each of a bilingual's languages to different degrees depending on whom they are speaking to. For example, a Polish-English bilingual in the touristic city of Cracow speaks with native friends in Polish. When a foreign tourist is encountered on the streets asking for directions, English will quickly be activated. When all the people in the conversation speak both languages, they can switch between their languages interchangeably. We aim to understand **how the mechanisms underlying language switching adjust to different contexts** to achieve successful communication.

Not only do bilingual conversations occur in different language situations, but other activities that are not related to language can also occur in different contexts. For example, when driving on a highway, we need to keep focused on the task of driving, but when driving downtown with pedestrians and cyclists around, we need to broaden our attention to switch flexibly. We will investigate **the extent to which these mechanisms during driving in the city, which require greater attention, are like those used in bilingualism**.

In summary, the goal of the project is to understand: (1) language switching mechanisms during a more naturalistic conversation, (2) the flexibility of these mechanisms in different types of language conversations, and (3) their similarity to other non-language mechanisms that we use in daily life. Bilinguals will take part in different experiments, among which an interactive quiz paradigm. During this task, participants are asked to answer one-sentence questions about general knowledge as quickly as possible or a picture naming paradigm preceded by short spoken questions asking them 'Co to jest?' or 'What is this?'. We will combine both well-established and novel paradigms to examine how bilinguals in naturalistic conversations switch between their languages with ease to achieve effective and **successful communication**.