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Bilinguals’ processing of lexical cues in L1 and L2: an eye-tracking study

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**ABSTRACT**
This study seeks to understand how bilinguals process texts with lexical cues in their first language (L1) and second language (L2) using an eye-tracking methodology. Quantitative data were obtained from an eye-tracker and a post-test, while qualitative data were gathered through interviews with the participants. The findings from the eye-tracking results indicate that the participants’ fixations were similar on novel words accompanied by their L1 cues and those accompanied by their L2 cues. When comparing the participants’ fixation on L1 and L2 cues, the findings show that the participants spent similar time on both types of cues. The use of L1 cues leads to a similar amount of acquisition of novel words when compared to the use of L2 cues. The study makes two contributions to research in language learning: Methodologically, the use of eye-tracking is discussed along with how it may be triangulated with other methods for studying language processing. Empirically, the study sheds light on how bilinguals process cues in their L1 and L2. Implications for future research and classroom practice are considered.

**KEYWORDS**
Eye-tracking; bilingual processing; lexical cues in L1 and L2; triangulation; translanguaging; languaculturing

1. Introduction

Recognizing and understanding how the bilingual mind works, which involves the processing of two languages, the first language (L1) and the second language (L2), is increasingly an active research agenda in language learning (e.g. De Groot & Kroll, 2014; Ju & Luce, 2004; Schreuder & Weltens, 1993). Assumptions have long been made regarding the role of L1 and L2 in a bilingual. As Ellis (2008) argues, still very little is known about bilinguals’ language acquisition. This lack of research is detrimental to the field (Ellis, 2008), which has implications for language...