

Language Switching Errors of Bilinguals: Role of Top down and Bottom up Process

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Abstract : Bilingual speakers generally can speak both languages with the same competency without mixing them intentionally and making mistakes, but sometimes errors occur in language selection. This quantitative study particularly deals with the language errors made by Urdu-English bilinguals. In this research, researchers have given special attention to the part played by bottom-up priming and top-down cognitive control in these errors. Unstable Urdu-English bilingual participants termed pictures and were prompted to shift from one language to another under the pressure of time. Different situations were given to manipulate the participants. The long and short runs trials of the same language were also given before switching to another language. The study is concluded with the findings that bilinguals made more errors when switching to the first language from their second language, and these errors are large in number, especially when a speaker is switching from L2 (second language) to L1 (first language) after a long run. When the switching is reversed, i.e., from L2 to L1, it had no effect at all. These results gave the clear responsibility of all these errors to top-down cognitive control.

Keywords : bottom up priming, language error, language switching, top down cognitive control

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