

# ***FIU LINGUISTICS COLLOQUIUM***

**Friday, April 12 @ 11:00 am  
Room: DM 110**

## **Social effects on code-switching: An ERP study**

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### Abstract

Most traditional research on the cognitive and neural mechanisms underlying the processing of sentences has neglected the fact that language is a social phenomenon. Recent research, however, shows that social factors can dramatically affect how sentences are comprehended. The current study focuses on code-switching in bilinguals. Code-switching needs to be socially licensed. For instance, code-switching can be felicitously used only in contexts where all conversation partners are bilingual. The aim of the current study was to investigate whether a bilingual processes a code-switch differently in the presence of a monolingual than a bilingual. We recorded EEG from Spanish-English bilinguals while they were reading sentences with and without code-switches in the presence of an English monolingual confederate in one half of the session, and in the presence of a Spanish-English bilingual confederate in the other half. Preliminary results show a late posterior positivity for code-switch versus no-switch control sentences. This effect was largest when the confederate was monolingual rather than bilingual, but only in the first half of the study. This suggests that top-down factors such as knowledge of who is present in the context, as well as the frequency of code-switches in the study affect the expectation and processing of code-switches. Implications for models of code-switching will be discussed.