Ilaria Venagli

How learning L2 English affects reading strategies and reading-related cognitive abilities in Italian learners with and without dyslexia.

The size of the visual and phonological units that are processed while reading is modulated by the orthographic depth of a language, thereby shaping reading strategies. Among the cognitive skills that have been shown to predict reading skills, visual attention span (VAS) skills, i.e., the number of visual elements processed simultaneously within a single fixation (~200 ms) in a multi-element array – play a crucial role and are furthermore causally related to some forms of dyslexia (see Valdois, 2022). According to the Grain Size Accommodation Hypothesis (Lallier & Carreiras, 2018) biliteracy modulates reading skills and subskills, which are subject to cross-linguistic transfer. Orthography-specific VAS and reading-strategy modulations have been shown in early bilinguals, supporting crosslinguistic interactions in this domain. Current evidence for the Grain Size Accommodation hypothesis is however limited to early (biliterate) bilinguals. The studies presented in this talk test the predictions of the Grain Size Accommodation Hypothesis in sequential late bilinguals and investigate whether and how proficiency in an orthographically opaque non-native L2 (English) modulates the reading strategies and related cognitive skills (focus on VAS) of Italian learners of English with and without developmental dyslexia (DYS vs. TD, respectively).