



CENTER FOR ADVANCED
STUDY OF LANGUAGE

Leveraging multilingual expertise: Improving LCTL learning outcomes through language cross-training

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Overview of talk

- Four complementary approaches:
 1. “Gateway” languages
 2. Psycholinguistic & cognitive factors
 3. Instructional methods
 4. Empowering learners



1. Gateway languages

- Similarity enhances language learning
- Can we identify “gateway” language(s)?
- May allow faster ramp-up
 - Leverage existing language expertise
 - Identify points of ease/difficulty for learners



Gateway Languages Database

- Functions:
 - Search by country
 - Search by language
 - Compare two languages
- Features being codified include:
 - Demographics of region
 - Language relationships
 - Language features
 - Script
 - Sounds
 - Word formation
 - Word types
 - Word order
 - Speech levels (honorifics)
 - Resources



Gateway Languages Database: Potential applications

- Ramping up in response to a crisis
- Selecting learners
- Identifying a learner's optimal target language
- Identifying “trouble areas” for a learner given his/her language profile



2. Psycholinguistic and cognitive factors

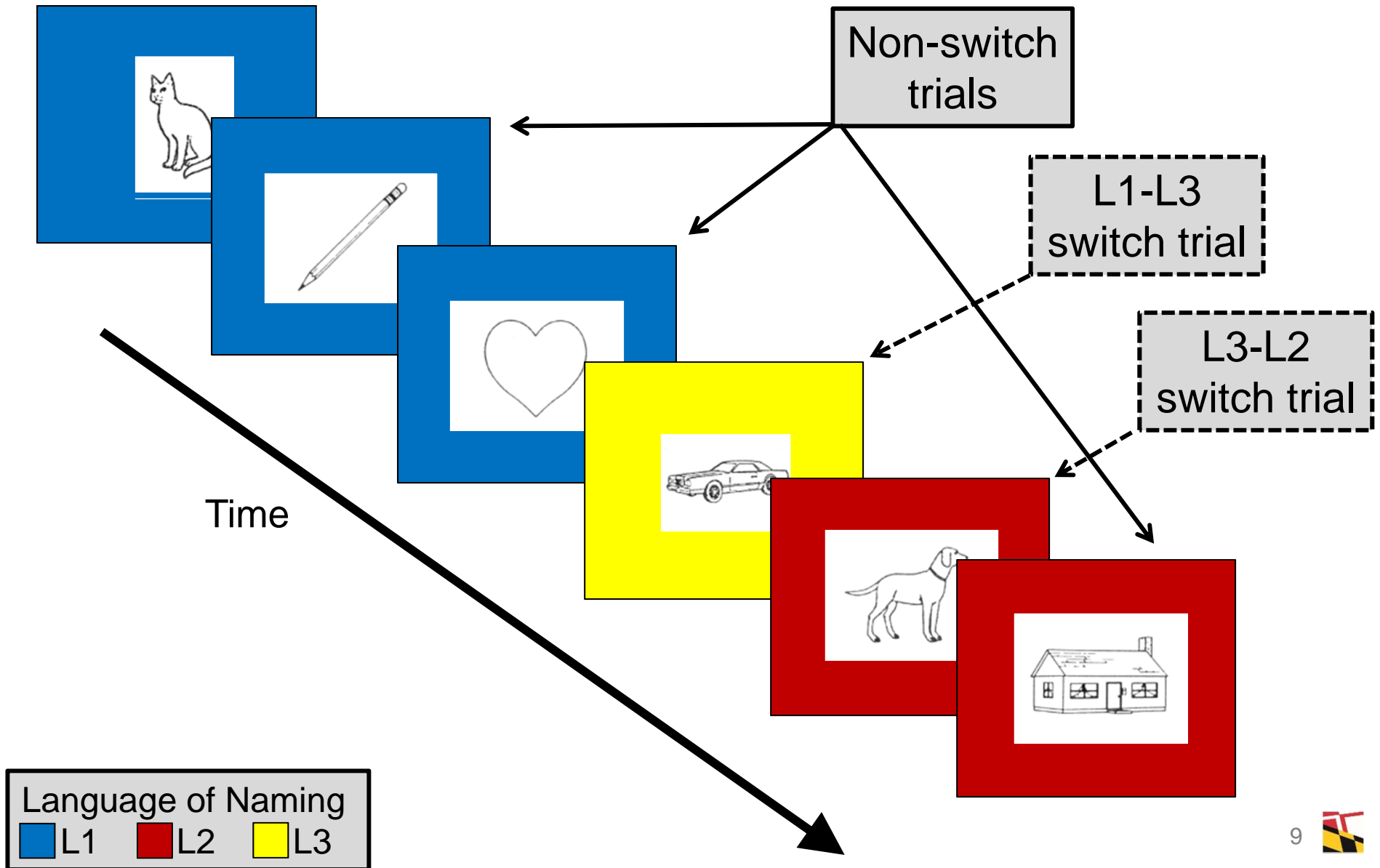
- Literature review: What is unique to *multilingualism*? (Linck et al., in press)
- Main factors:
 - Relative proficiency (*all* known languages)
 - Age of exposure (*all* known languages)
 - (Psycho)typological similarity
 - Type of task
 - Cognitive control / executive functions

Executive functions in multilingual language processing

- Laboratory language-switching task
 - Lexical access within mixed-language context
 - “Language control”



Example switching task



Switching study: Findings

- Executive functions related to language control
 - **Engaging/disengaging the dominant L1
- Demands on language control change with L2 and L3 proficiency
- Phonological similarity effects across all three languages



3. Instructional methods

- Limited literature on *cross-training* pedagogy
- Two empirical classroom studies
- Study 1 (glosses):
 - Use of L1 vs. L2 glosses while reading in L3
- Study 2 (grammar):
 - Inductive vs. deductive approaches to teaching L3 grammar



Study 1 (glosses): Overview

- L1 English learners of Ukrainian with Russian proficiency (current $n = 11$)
- Target words in Ukrainian texts:
 - Non-cognates
 - L2-L3 cognates
 - L2-L3 “false friends”

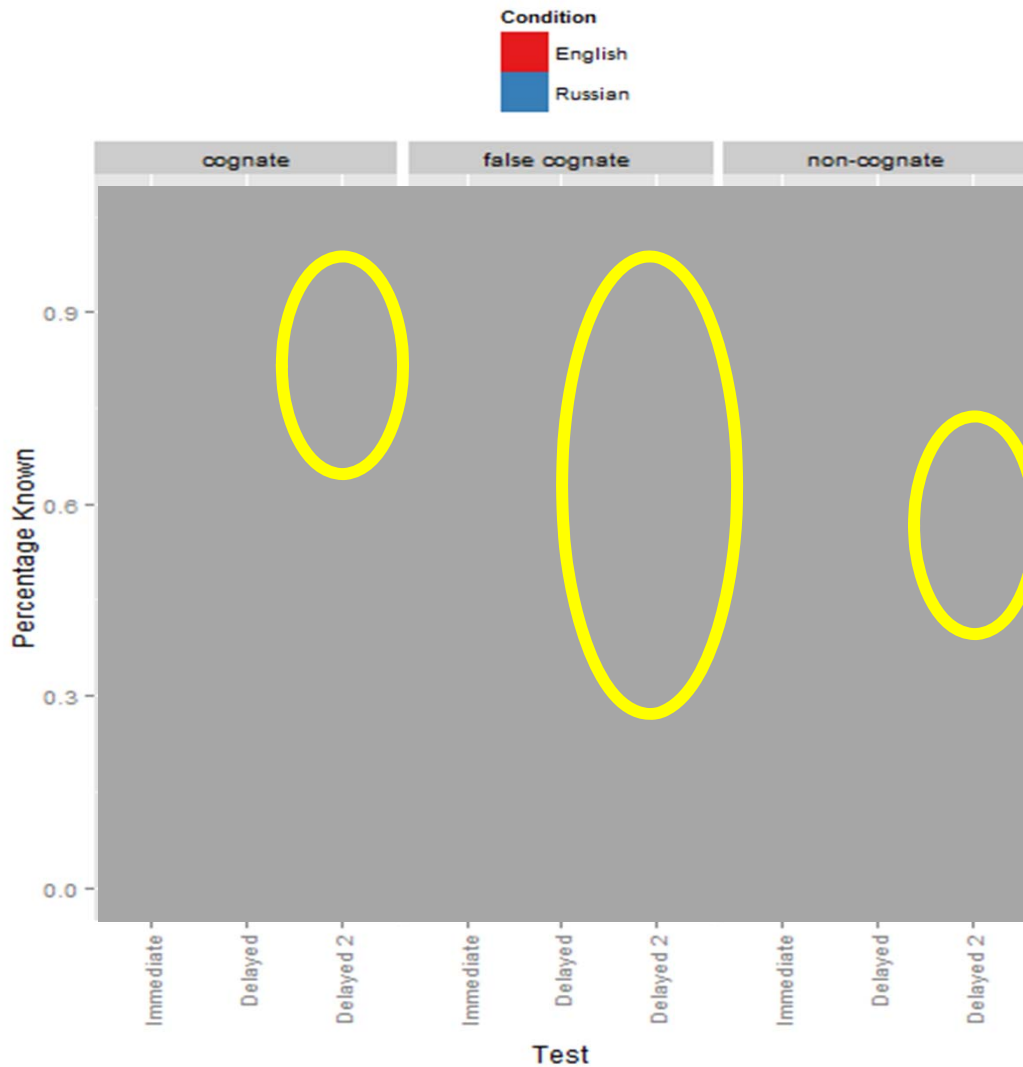


Study 1 (glosses): Design

- Read Ukrainian texts
 - Text A with L1 glosses, Text B with L2 glosses (counterbalanced)
- Practice exercise 1: blanks in original text
- Immediate posttest
- Practice exercise 2: crossword puzzle
- Delayed posttest 1 (after 3 days)
- Delayed posttest 2 (after 4 weeks)



Study 1 (glosses): Results



For cognates and non-cognates:
L1 glosses led to better learning and retention.

For L2-L3 false friends:
L2 glosses led to better retention after one month



Study 1 (glosses): Discussion

- Desirable difficulties
 - Avoid “easy” overlap, except...
- ...when learning false friends, draw attention to cross-language conflict
- Implications for instruction



4. Empowering learners

- Issue: working with native speakers who are not trained in pedagogy/linguistics
 - e.g., Immersion
- Taking a *procedural* focus (vs. content)
- Elicitation methods adopted from field linguistics and field anthropology



Handbook for self-training

- Modular format: small, digestible chapters
 - Foundational concepts (e.g., contrast)
 - Foundational skills (e.g., recognizing pitch)
 - Discovery techniques (e.g., using carrier sentences to elicit contrasts)
- Still in development



Summary

- Enhance multilingual learning by:
 - Describing “Gateway” languages
 - Identifying learner characteristics
 - Developing/assessing instructional methods
 - Empowering learners



Thank you!
Questions?

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