11 Understanding Phrasal Verbs in Monolinguals and Bilinguals

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Abstract

This study investigates how English monolinguals and bilinguals access lexical forms such as call on, which can be interpreted as either a phrasal verb, as in John called on the student, or as a verb-preposition combination, as in John called on the third floor. The results of an on-line sentence comprehension experiment indicate that both monolinguals and early bilinguals access phrasal verbs more quickly than verb-preposition combinations. The results also suggest that early bilinguals access both phrasal verbs and verb-preposition combinations as quickly as monolinguals do, whereas late bilinguals (even with high proficiency in English) do not.