Effects of phonetic cues on processing Mandarin-English code switches in sentence comprehension
Alice Shen, Susanne Gahl, & Keith Johnson (University of California, Berkeley) azshen@berkeley.edu

MOTIVATION
Code-switching comes at a processing cost ([1], but see [2]). Yet bilingual speakers code-switch very often, and listeners don’t seem to mind! Why not? Listener switch cost may be mitigated by phonetic cues signaling an impending code switch [3,4].

HYPOTHESIS
If listeners use phonetic cues to anticipate code switches, then removing prior phonetic context should impede comprehension.

METHODS
Concept monitoring (Experiment 1) and Eye tracking (Experiment 2)

EYE TRACKING
36 sentences; Growth curve analysis [5]: Switch x Splice (x Position)

Look to Mandarin competitor

More looks to Mandarin competitor when target is code switch vs. non-switch. But fewer looks when spliced vs. unspliced code switch.

Reactions time = target word onset to button press 48 sentences + 16 catch trials
Linear mixed effects regression: Switch x Splice

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION
The availability of phonetic cues does not completely offset switch cost (Exp. 1). Removal of phonetic context via slicing impedes processing code switches (Exp. 2), suggesting that, in unspliced material, listeners utilize phonetic cues to anticipate code-switches.

REFERENCES

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BACKGROUND
Phonetic cues to code-switches: Spanish-English: VOT, intonation [3,4].

So what are the English-to-Mandarin phonetic cues? Not known! One possibility: Pitch contours