

Elisa Scerrati – Abstract

Does the Mode of Presentation of Stimuli Affect Modality-Switching Costs? A Study with the Lexical Decision Task

Modality-switching costs with conceptual representations (e.g., switching from the sentence “blender is loud” to the sentence “banana is yellow”, see Pecher et al. 2003; 2004) have so far been found by means of the property verification task. We investigated whether this type of processing costs could also emerge with a task that does not emphasize conceptual processing such as the lexical decision task (LDT). Moreover, we were interested in examining whether such costs are affected by the mode of presentation of sentences. We run an experiment in which participants were required to perform a LDT on a target sentence (e.g., “butter is yellowish”, “leaves rustle”) presented either visually or aurally. The target sentence could share both, none or one between the mode of presentation and the content modality of a previously presented prime sentence (e.g., “the light is flickering”, “the sound is echoing”). Results showed that with a more superficial task such as the LDT the mode of presentation is far more influential than the content modality of sentences in bringing about the modality-switching costs. This result speaks in favor of the grounded account of knowledge (Barsalou, 1999; 2008) which claims that perceptual and conceptual systems are tightly interwoven.