

Title: Picture Naming Performance in Diglossic Aphasia

Abstract

Background

It is assumed that a large part of the world's population is diglossic. Therefore, it is surprising that differences between performance in lexical retrieval of standard languages and dialects have hardly been studied so far. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, the use of the dialects of Swiss German (SG) and the standard variety High German (HG) depends on the pragmatic context. This coexistence of two varieties of the same language is also referred to as diglossia (Haas, 2004). While SG enjoys a very high prestige and is always preferred for oral communication regardless of social status, HG is used for written communication and formal settings such as examinations. Psycholinguistic studies of dialects have only recently started to address the question how lexical retrieval within two varieties of one language can be explained. Melinger (2021) suggests a Swinging Lexical Network approach for dialects. It assumes that there is a representational difference at the conceptual level for certain synonyms. This could lead to interference in picture naming, i. e. lower correctness or delayed naming. An important mechanism to help suppress one variety when the other is asked for seems to be cognitive control. Studies have shown that a high number of persons with aphasia (PWA) seem to be affected from deficits of cognitive control irrespective of their mono- or bilingual state (Faroqi-Shah et al., 2018). These deficits may result in insufficient inhibition of word forms of one variety. So far diglossic aphasia has hardly been studied (Widmer Beierlein & Vorweg, 2017). This leads to the question whether word retrieval patterns in diglossic aphasia are similar to bilingual aphasia.

Method

34 PWA (23 Anomic, 8 Broca, 5 Wernicke, 1 Global) and 34 healthy underwent a picture naming test. Half of the pictures were named in SG and half in HG.

Results

First results indicate a tentative difference in naming correctness between SG and HG, with a higher number of correctly named items in HG, in particular for anomic and Wernicke PWA. Furthermore, these two aphasic groups showed a considerable degree of variant change towards HG, when asked to name pictures in SG.

Discussion

The difference in correctness as well as the change to HG could imply that word forms in HG might receive more activation, probably from their graphemic counterparts. It might also indicate that the degree of cognitive control deficits may differ between aphasia types, leading to different performance patterns of correctness between HG and SG due to a possible lack of inhibition.

References

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