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An Inquiry into Bilingual and Monolingual Repetition Effects

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Introduction

Bilinguals operate in a more varied linguistic environment than do monolinguals. The bilingual's success in navigating between two languages may depend on heightened phonological awareness (Brisbois, 1995; Campbell & Sais, 1995; Durgunoglu & Hancin-Bhatt, 1992; Eviatar & Ibrahim, 2000). It is not clear, however, what the exact role of the bilingual's heightened phonological awareness is in the reading performance of mature, adult readers. A study comparing reading performance and memory of bilinguals and monolinguals was conducted to answer the question do bilinguals process text in the same way as bilinguals?

Method

The study was conducted using Raney, Therriault, and Minkoff's (2000) paraphrased text repetition procedure. Thirty fluent Spanish-English bilinguals and 29 monolingual English speakers read silently 16 pairs of text twice in succession (a total of 32 passages). The second reading was either identical to the first passage or a paraphrase of the first passage. This varied the linguistic environment at the word level providing a natural manipulation to test how much the change in wording influenced fluent bilinguals' reading times compared to the reading times of fluent monolingual readers of English. Second readings occurred immediately after the first (immediate condition) or after reading four intervening unrelated passages (delayed condition). Pre-testing confirmed that bilinguals and monolinguals were equally fluent in English and that the bilinguals were equally fluent in Spanish and English.

Results

Consistent with our predictions, bilinguals read slower than monolinguals but exhibited repetition effects (reduced second reading times) similar to monolinguals when reading identical passages in both the immediate and delayed conditions. However, contrary to the research's assumption, no phonological awareness advantage was found for bilinguals. Both bilinguals and monolinguals exhibited similar reductions in repetition effects (the paraphrase effect) when reading paraphrases in the immediate condition. Neither bilinguals nor monolinguals exhibited a paraphrase effect in the delayed condition. We interpreted the data within the framework of

Raney's (2003) context-dependent representation model and concluded that there is no difference in bilingual and monolingual text processing over time. Table 1 summarizes the reading times for bilinguals and monolinguals across conditions.

Table 1: Mean reading times (in s)

Language	First reading	Second reading	
		Identical	Paraphrase
<u>Immediate re-reading</u>			
Bilinguals	43.3	30.3 (1.30)	32.7 (1.30)
Monolinguals	36.4	25.4 (1.40)	27.9 (1.40)
<u>Delayed re-reading</u>			
Bilinguals	43.8	32.1 (1.30)	34.0 (1.30)
Monolinguals	38.4	29.4 (1.40)	30.5 (1.40)

Note. First reading presented for comparison purposes only. SE in parentheses.

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