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Sustained Attention in Phonological Form Preparation: Evidence from Highly Associated Word Pairs

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Abstract

In phonological form preparation, speakers are able to prepare in advance when to-be-spoken words share initial segments, despite not knowing which word they will be asked to produce. The standard account viewed preparation as partial production and therefore claimed that all possible words must share that segment (e.g. Roelofs, 1997). Alternatively, preparation occurs through a flexible sustained attention process that is external to production. Recently, O'Seaghdha and Frazer (2014) demonstrated preparation benefits in non-unanimous sets using picture naming and word reading versions of the blocked cyclic task, though not in the more attentionally-demanding paired associates version. Here, the current studies demonstrate small, but significant, preparation benefits using the paired-associates task, but only when cue-target pairs are highly associated (e.g. dog-cat, oreo-cookie, hot-cold, worm-bait). This finding supports the sustained attentional account of preparation in word production.