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Semantic relatedness and retrieval from semantic memory

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Abstract

The structure of semantic memory has often been investigated by using studies that manipulate the semantic relatedness of stimulus items, and use facilitation and inhibition effects to make inferences about semantic memory's structure. In the current work, we present two experiments using the visual world paradigm where we systematically manipulate the semantic relatedness of the distractor item when a participant is asked to look at (Experiment 1) or click on (Experiment 2) a target image. Both experiments yielded consistent patterns of results such that there was more competition from the distractor image the more semantically related it was to the target. The graded effects observed provide additional evidence for a graded and feature-based representational structure in semantic memory.