Ratings of Familiarity, Imageability, and Age of Acquisition in Correlation with Compound Headedness in Persian

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ABSTRACT

Several variables can affect the recognition, recall, and naming of compound words. Some of the variables, that have been found to have an affect on the processing of words in general, and compounds in particular, include age of acquisition (AOA), familiarity, and imageability (cf. Stadthagen-gonzalez & Davis, 2006; Juhasz, Lai, & Woodcock, 2015). There are presently data on these variables from English and only a few other languages. To allow more cross-linguistic research, there is a need for such information on languages other than English, and particularly on ones with a different syntactical make up. Data on lexical variables in more languages would allow us to consider the effects of these background variables when studying the role of certain syntactic structures in complex word recognition and processing in different languages. Persian is a language of interest in the study of compound word processing. It is an Indo-European language that allows variable head positions for compound words (Kahnemuyipour, 2014), unlike English that prefers right-headed compounds. The present study introduces a database of AOA, familiarity, and imageability ratings for 148 Persian noun-noun (NN) compound words and non-words (constructed of real word constituents) collected from 102 participants. Our database includes information on right and left constituents of these compounds, their headedness, meaning in English, length in letters and phonemes, and Google frequencies. The data analysis indicated that familiarity, imageability, and AOA are highly inter-correlated in both right-headed and left-headed compounds. All the words in the current database were included in a reaction time experiment with primed naming of these compounds. We found that imageability and familiarity are significant predictors of naming times for Persian NN compound words.

KEYWORDS: morphological processing, compound words, familiarity, imageability, age of acquisition, compound headedness, Persian

References

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