Language Comprehension

The role of inflectional suffixes and grammatical category in lexical processing of Greek words

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This study examines the effects of morphology on visual word recognition in Greek using the priming paradigm. Previous studies using this paradigm often interpret the facilitation in the processing of target words when preceded by morphological-related primes as evidence of morphological processing in word recognition. In the present study, we examine the role of morphological priming on morphologically complex words that consist of a stable stem (odig-) and verb (e.g. -o, -eis) and/or noun (e.g. -os, -ou) inflectional suffixes in a lexical decision task using masked (Experiment 1) and delayed (Experiment 2) priming. Our aim was twofold: firstly, to explore the role of inflectional morphology in the processing of morphologically complex words in a highly inflected language in which words are typically composed of a stem and a suffix; and, secondly, to examine possible differences in priming effects when processing words from the same and/or different grammatical class (verb vs noun). Overall, results suggest that neither inflectional morphology nor grammatical class play a critical role in processing visual words in Greek. This indicates that morphologically complex Greek words are processed in their entirety rather in their component morphemes, and, also, independently of their grammatical class.