The Representation of Multiple Translations in Bilingual Memory: An Examination of Lexical Organization for Concrete, Abstract, and Emotion Words in Spanish-English Bilinguals

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Tokowicz and Kroll (2007) originally reported that the number of translations a word has across languages influences the speed with which bilinguals translate concrete and abstract words from one language to another. The current work examines how the number of translations that characterize a word influences bilingual lexical organization and the processing of concrete, abstract and emotional stimuli. Experiment 1 examined whether the number-of-translations effect reported previously could be obtained in a different task (i.e., lexical decision task) using the same materials presented by Tokowicz and Kroll. Decision latencies revealed no significant differences between concrete and abstract words, which suggested that this task was not sensitive enough to detect a number-of-translations effect. In Experiment 2, number of translation norms for Spanish-English bilinguals were obtained using three different scoring measures, in order to create a corpus of items that represented the population of interest. Results indicated that bilinguals generated more translations to emotion words, as compared to both concrete and abstract words. In Experiment 3, Spanish-English bilinguals translated high frequency words with one and more than one translation. As reported by Tokowicz and Kroll, concreteness effects emerged only when words had more than one translation across languages. The goal of Experiment 4 was to examine how emotion words with more than one translation are processed, and how the presence of emotional stimuli within the word list influences the processing of concrete and abstract items. Concreteness effects emerged in both language directions for words with more than one translation, and in the L1-L2 language direction for words with a single translation across languages. This finding suggested that emotional context influences the number-of-translations effect, such that the effect emerges in both language directions when emotion words are present. In Experiment 5, bilinguals translated low frequency concrete and abstract words with one and more than one translation. The results replicated the pattern observed in Experiment 3. Additional analyses examined the
influence of an individual's ability to inhibit multiple translations, as a function of working memory span. The results revealed that in the absence of emotional stimuli, individuals with higher memory spans were better able to inhibit alternative translations of a word. [The dissertation citations contained here are published with the permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Copies of dissertations may be obtained by Telephone (800) 1-800-521-0600. Web page: http://www.proquest.com/en-US/products/dissertations/individuals.shtml.]

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