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Case Transition Format and Lexical Decision Performance: Does Spacing Reduce the Benefit of Orthographic Regularity?

College of Sciences and Health Professions

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Abstract

Some models of visual word identification propose that identification is analytic—mediated exclusively by letter identification. However, some studies have shown that there are phenomena that suggest a route to word identification involves holistic stimulus properties. In previous research, using a lexical decision task, in which participants are asked to determine whether letter strings are words or nonwords, we have found that response times to orthographically regular words (i.e., lowercase, uppercase, and initial uppercase formats) are faster than those to orthographically irregular words (i.e., words that include a case transition other than initial uppercase to lowercase). In this experiment, we investigated whether spacing between letters reduces the benefit of orthographic regularity. Sixteen students participated in a lexical decision experiment in which items varied in spacing and case-transition format. Items were either packed (e.g., BEAR) or spaced (e.g., B E A R); there were eight different case-transition formats (e.g., bear, BEAR, Bear, bEAR, beaR, BEAR, beAR and BEar). We found that at both spacings, response times for orthographically regular forms (e.g., bear, BEAR, Bear) were faster than those for orthographically irregular forms. Spacing had no overall effect on response times for words, and did not reduce the benefit of orthographic regularity.